

SIGHT & SOUND

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Indian Progress

The Argentine Film
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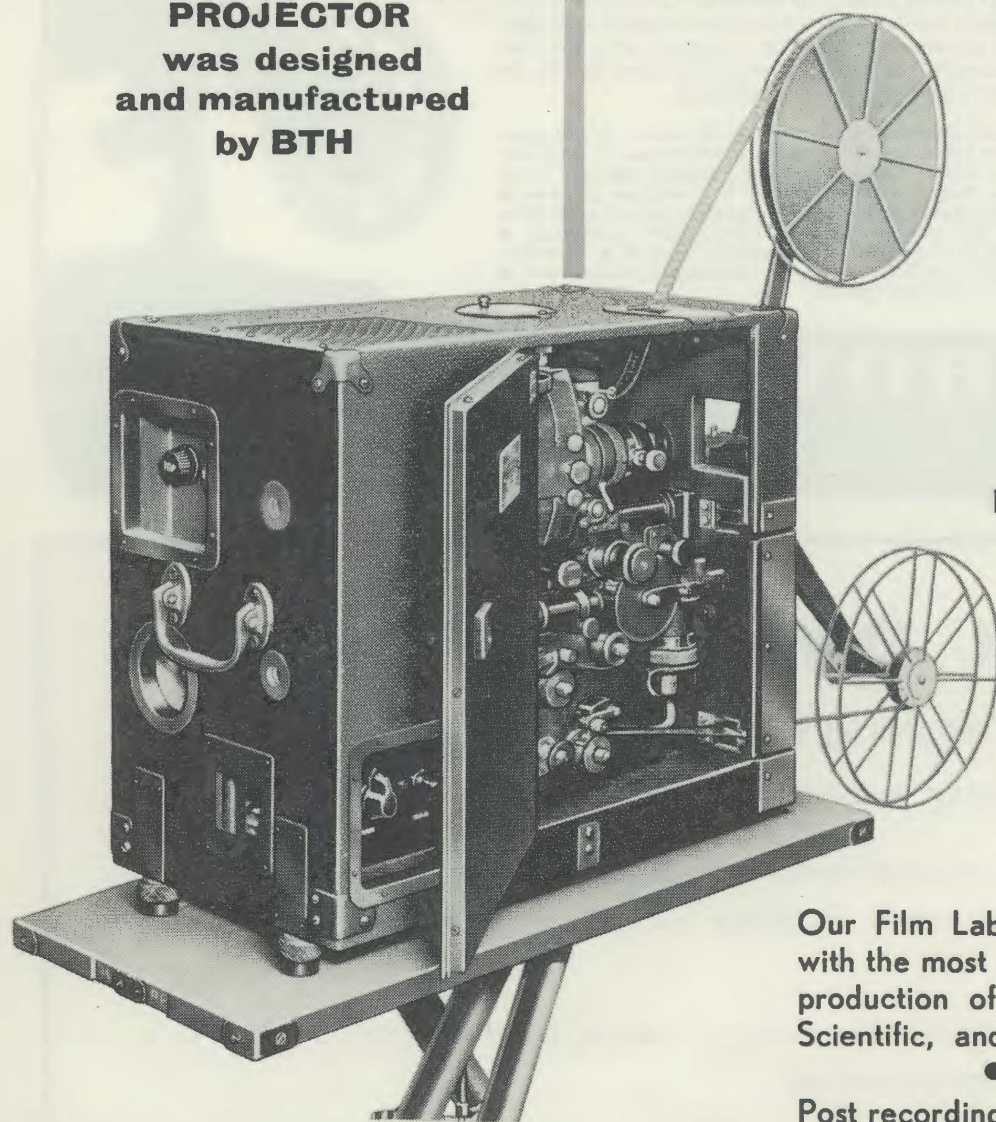
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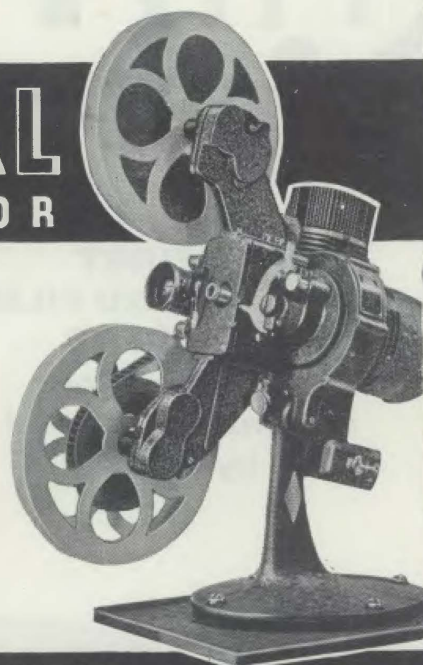
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TO READERS

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Rehearsal for War

LET THE SCREEN HELP!

by ANDREW BUCHANAN

I WRITE THESE words in a country at war. Whether peace will have broken out by the time they are in print makes no difference to what I have to say. To-day, films lie coiled in tins, unreleased. The industry lurks, uncertain, behind sandbags. Some people tell me the war will be over in a month; others, in three years. Some want to fight to a bitter end, others are of military age. For me, there has been no fundamental peace since 1918—merely a cessation of hostilities. And now, the question which looms larger than most others is, has Film been utilised to the best advantage since the Armistice? Has it made a major contribution to peace? Is it now being used in the best possible way under the worst possible circumstances?

"No" seems the word which answers all those questions. I have always contended that Film is the mightiest influence in our midst—that it should have been the Ambassador which brought peace to the world during the last twenty years—peace, as distinct from a period of apparent quiet during which nationalistic hatred was permitted, indeed, encouraged, to smoulder, and increase in intensity, until it burst into flames. The nations have rarely utilised Film to create international friendship. Usually, they have turned out reels insinuating that they are, respectively,

superior to their neighbours. Since the last war, a generation has grown up which owes a great amount of its reasoning power, or lack of it, to the screen. With few exceptions, the screen has not been allowed to exert its unique power for furthering international understanding, which lifts it above the printed word, and even above the broadcast message. Film has achieved material success, but that is all, and material progress uninfluenced by the spiritual factor is without ultimate value. In failing, Film has provided the third side of a pattern best described as an Infernal Triangle, composed of press, radio and screen—a network which casts its influence over the entire globe. All nations have contributed to its creation—all use it for their own ends—all their ends are righteous—all their peoples suffer. A vivid and tragic example of the misuse of the achievements of science. It may be contended that radio is mightier than Film, and this thought gains ground when we remember that millions, in all nations, hear, *simultaneously*, the voices of their respective governments, which, with verbal bullets, penetrate into millions of minds, daily, nightly. The policy of a nation may be right—it may be wrong, but one cannot escape from the invisible bombardment ceaselessly formulating it. Yet, its invisibility

renders it less effective than Film, which is both seen and heard. The power of radio lies in the fact that it enters one's home, whereas Film confronts only those who seek it. Nevertheless, the accessibility of cinemas in large numbers, together with the universal opinion that entertainment in film form is an essential factor in modern life finally lifts the screen above the loud-speaker, at least insofar as power of appeal is concerned. For a long time, Germany has been making films both for internal and neutral nation release, projecting herself flatteringly, knowing the value of screen propaganda. Her productions have been beautifully made. America, too, has, for years, been publicising no less an object than America, which is consequently, the best known nation in the world. Indeed, countless Britishers know more about the U.S.A. than they do about Britain. Maybe, there is no real harm in this, for entertainment values have not been reduced to permit of the inclusion of the indirect propaganda.

Again, the Soviet film is a powerful example of how Film can be utilised to project governmental policy. True, it has been used by Russia for internal consumption, but the lesson is there. However, generally speaking, the outputs of the world have contributed towards nationalism rather than internationalism, in the non-political, human sense of the word. Producers have thus been moulding minds in no new, enlightened way, but in accordance with the traditional, accepted viewpoint which makes war inevitable.

But, one says, a commercial industry must watch the box-office—must “give the public what it wants”—must amuse and not moralise. Unfortunately, we have not learnt how to cater for the public and at the same time save it from itself. We have played for safety, which, once again, turns out to be the most dangerous of all games. That is why I deplore the fact that the screen has not been made to contribute towards a finer civilisation. It has been satisfied, the world over, to offer negative propaganda, which is commercially safe, instead of having the courage and the vision to present positive propaganda. Ah, but it's no use crying over spilt milk, someone murmurs. Surely, to-day's tragedy is due to the fact that we are all pretending we have never spilt any milk, yet we know we have spilt gallons of it. Now it has turned sour, and we are hastening to remove the ugly stains, lest they reveal guilt for the chaos which surrounds us.

Can Film help to clarify the position, now, and in the future? Most certainly. In the last war, the British industry lost its grip. Now, we are sensibly determined to hold everything together—to be ready to resume when hostilities cease—to make the screen serve us to the best advantage. How? There are three main methods: First, entertainment; second, news; third, propaganda. The first two will look after themselves, given the right encouragement. The third demands more than encouragement. It needs vision and action. Prior to the present German regime, I worked

in close co-operation with that nation, and secured numerous facilities for filming its life, the results being released throughout Great Britain. I made similar arrangements with several other European countries, and, for ten years, urged that Britain should project herself in the same manner throughout Europe, but without success. I felt, and still feel, that fundamental peace can be secured, not by armed threats, superior force, territorial expansion, nor narrow nationalism, but by an ever increasing understanding of the peoples, by the peoples *via the screen*, which is the surest way of bringing one country before another. This fact is doubly significant when one remembers that nations would be non-existent without their citizens.

But, Europe apart, what of the British Empire—the greatest network of all, yet the most poorly represented on the screens of the world. Is not Chicago more familiar to British people than, say, Toronto, or Melbourne? Have we ever really seen life in Canada, heard the voices of South Africans, studied the beauties of India, or witnessed any pictorial tributes to the pioneer work in our Colonies? And, despite the growing success of recent British feature films in the Dominions, do the peoples of those vast countries know how Great Britain lives—what it looks like, and all the rest of it? Surely, the time is overdue for the establishing of businesslike production centres in every Dominion, controlled by expert technicians, which shall create a *ceaseless* flow of short films (and long ones, too, in time) for projection, not only in Britain, but throughout the world, whilst we, in turn, make an equally continuous output which shall show the Dominions what Britain is really like. A spasmodic output is not enough. The flow needs to be as steady as news-reel outputs, and as far-reaching. Moreover, this great inter-changing programme should, I suggest, present the constructive side of life—should reveal man's great achievements in the cause of peace, so very different to the conventional picture of their misuse in the cause of war. Let the nations of Europe see the Dominions, and the Dominions learn of Europe. Let Britain show her ramifications which are for the general welfare of humanity, to humanity. Let all these films crush the spirit of suspicion which is rampant everywhere, and above all, let the screen do what it can do better than any other medium—prove to the peoples of each nation that, fundamentally, they are just like the peoples of all other nations. Therein lies the answer to world stability and sanity, and the answer to those who control the destinies of countries who urge millions of citizens to destroy each other in a vain attempt to achieve national security.

Therefore, this is no time for the Celluloid Ambassador to receive its passports. Instead, it must make up for lost opportunities NOW.

[Still from *Rehearsal for War*, directed and produced by H. KLINE, A. HACKENSCHMIED and PETER MAYER.]

TREASURE TROVE

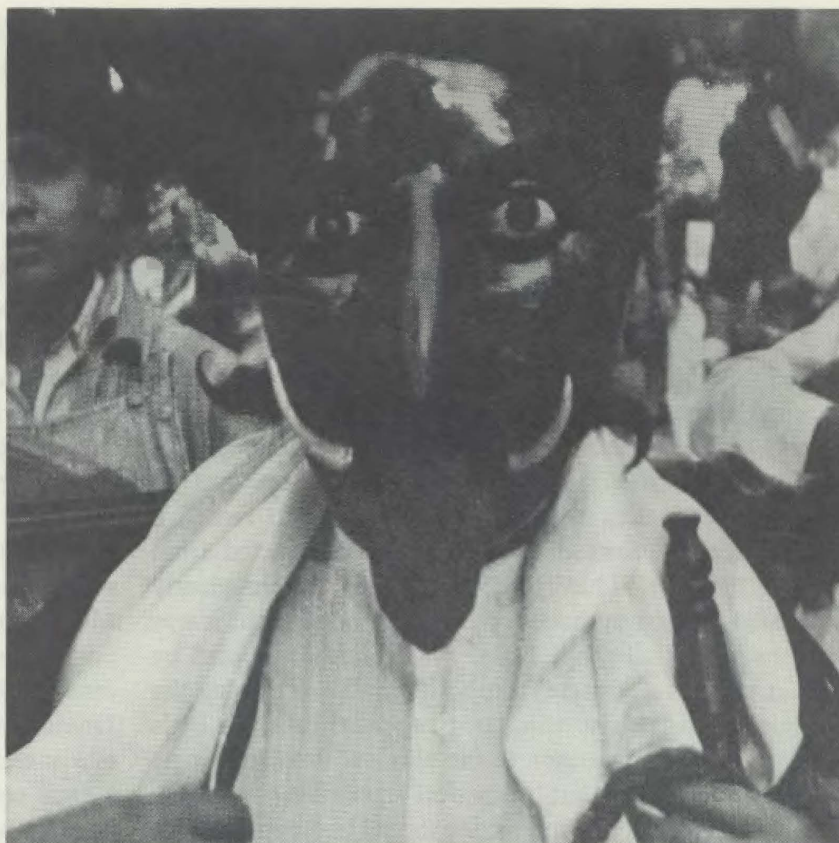
Eisenstein's Mexican film has become almost a legend. Here MARIE SETON describes the recovery of the lost 100,000 feet and tells you something about it.

Stills show:

This page: A mask used in a dance celebrating the Festival of Guadalupe

Page 91: A satirical pinnate figure represents the Bride. These are made for Christmas, filled with sweets and later destroyed.

Page 92: Mexican types. A Spanish boy and girl at the Mexico City Bullring



THERE WAS NEVER a film made over which there have been so many arguments, accusations and counter-accusations as the Mexican film of Sergei Eisenstein. The arguments arising from the director not being permitted to edit his film in 1932 became so involved in Mexico, the United States and Europe after his return to the Soviet Union, and the appearance of the Hollywood edited film, *Thunder Over Mexico*, that what should have been the real objective—the saving of the film—was lost sight of. In the midst of protests made on behalf of Eisenstein by people who had worked with him in Mexico, and who exonerated him from all blame, and many false reports circulated in America where he was not given a hearing, he himself was powerless to do anything having returned to Moscow with the assurance that his negative would be sent to him to edit there. When it was not sent he remained aloof from the controversy, and seldom discussed the film until the matter became past history, and he, like most other people, believed that the whole of his material had been virtually destroyed. This impression was created by the rumour that sections of it had been distributed among different Hollywood studios to be used as background material. The material remaining after about 10 per cent of the whole had been used in the disputed film, *Thunder Over Mexico*, was from time to time submitted to studios as background material, but no one ever used it for the simple reason that it would have overshadowed the foreground of any film in which it had been incorporated. Incidentally, duplicates and retakes of almost every scene of the 10 per cent used exist even to-day, although the negative of the edited

Thunder Over Mexico was destroyed in a fire some time ago in New York. At various times people attempted to find a solution for the remaining material which was approximately 110,000 feet, but the only one that materialised after *Thunder Over Mexico*, was a two-reel short entitled *Death Day*. Finally, after the completion of this film the whole remaining material was handed over by Mr. Sol Lesser, the first agent of Mr. Upton Sinclair, to a stock shot company owned by Mr. Abe Meyer, who had supervised the music for *Thunder*. Here it remained intact, though much of it unclassified, until I went through the whole of the footage prior to taking over the rights of one almost complete copy of the material which I am now editing in collaboration with Paul Burnford, late of Strand Films, efforts to get the whole of the material back to Eisenstein having failed. Having been to Mexico to ascertain what scenes might be missing, of which I find there are only a few, it seems that the report that Eisenstein shot 200,000 feet of film can only be explained by an estimate having been made which included duplicate prints of certain scenes of which I found in some cases as many as four and quite often two.

On the only occasion that Sergei Eisenstein spoke to me about his Mexican film, he told me three things which enabled me to classify it, though I do not consider that this information entitles me to say that I either know his plan in any detail, or that I have been able to follow it. He said he planned the film in five parts, each approximately to be condensed into two reels, one of which, the fourth showing the Mexican revolution, he was unable to complete as

disagreements had arisen with Mr. Sinclair. The four parts which he did complete were: (1) Mexico before the conquest of Spain. (2) The effects of the conquest and the introduction of Christianity upon the Indians. (3) The story which was used in *Thunder Over Mexico* showing that although Mexico was free from Spain, the social and economic system introduced by the Spanish Conquest still persisted. (4) Modern Mexico in which the most ancient customs dating from pre-Conquest Mexico were blended with the modern world and a growing industrialism. The second thing that Eisenstein said was that when he went to Mexico, he found that in different parts of the country, and among different races of Indians, the whole history of Mexico still existed in the preservation of customs or traditions, and that, therefore, he was able to record a "living history" instead of a history reconstructed from written histories. Thirdly, he said he had been greatly interested in the way the Mexicans (and he thought it was perhaps true of all people) were unconsciously affected by certain ancient forms of composition, for example, the triangle. In regards to this last statement, it is the basis of Eisenstein's composition in the film; and it is startlingly evident in Mexico that numerical symbolism, and the triangle form, runs as a connecting thread between the most diverse tribes and districts, so that, in fact, it becomes the only coherent pattern in a country of the greatest diversity.

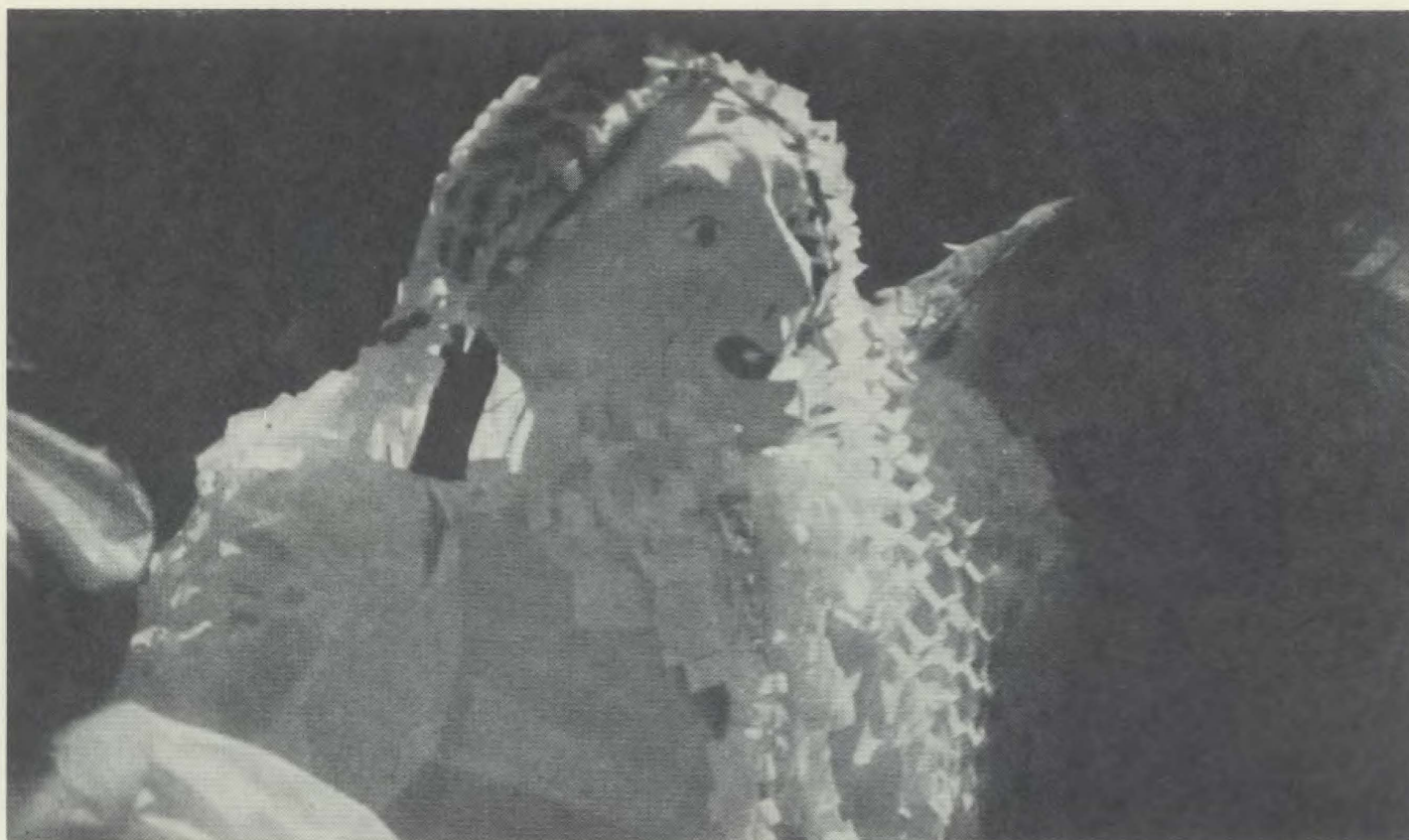
Although there is no chronology in this film in the accepted sense as everything related to the past also exists in the present, it is only possible to give an idea of the material according to whether the emotional feeling has its roots in the ancient life of the Indians, whether it springs from the conquest of Spain, or whether it is more modern. Geographically the film covers mainly three areas—the jungle of Yucatan as the ruined Maya city of Chichén-Itzá, and the colonial towns of Merida and Izamal in this most southern state; the tropical town of Tehuantepec in the south-west; and many towns and a maguey plantation on the high plateau of Mexico. In each area the race is different; and the climate changes from almost equatorial heat to comparative mildness, while the vegetation alters from tangled jungle to forests of palms, and on to the stark desert maguey plants. The pure-blooded descendants of the Mayas, Aztecs, Zapotecs and Huicholes; the purest Spaniards, and many whose blood is mixed once or many times weave this enormous pattern of Mexico through a record of their daily life, their dances and the traditional pilgrimages.

At Chichén-Itzá, generally supposed to be the oldest Maya ruins in Mexico, Eisenstein shot the great pyramid and the unbelievably beautiful temples covered with stone faces, the features of which are to be seen in the living faces of the Mayas who live in scattered villages in the jungle. Eisenstein set these modern peasants against the figures of long forgotten gods and warriors with such force

that the deserted city seems to teem with life as it did centuries ago. To this day the Mayas have preserved many customs that belong to their remote past; one of them is the ceremony that occurs at burials. They carry their dead to the fields (after the Spanish conquest it was to the henequen plantations of their masters) and there they eat the ritual food with the dead, and drink *pesole*, the sacred drink of the Maya gods, pouring some of it upon the soil so that the soul of the dead may endow the earth with greater fertility. This moving ceremony was recorded by Eisenstein near the colonial town of Izamal, and though it is acted, it is so authentic in its feeling that it has deceived many Mexicans. Also in this town, probably because it was in the past a famous centre of Maya pilgrimages, and later became the centre of Christianity under the dictatorship of Bishop Landa, Eisenstein chose the ruined pyramid there and the great church built by Landa with stone taken from the Maya temple, to be the scene for the Journey to Calvary, a pilgrimage which takes place in many parts of Mexico during Easter, and which I myself have seen. In this Drama of the Crucifixion three men "impersonating" Christ and the two thieves are symbolically crucified; while a great crowd of the devout climb the steep steps on their knees. This "impersonating" of the Christian Christ came naturally to the Indians because long before they had heard of Christ it was a custom that a man should impersonate the "God of Gods" for a year before he was sacrificed at Easter time.

Another ceremony connected with the introduction of Christianity and saturated with pre-Christian symbolism which Eisenstein records with immense detail, is the festival of the Virgin of Guadalupe, held on December 12th. This festival, the most famous in Mexico, brings hundreds and thousands of Indians to the Virgin's shrine just outside Mexico City, to whose honour they dance as they danced before to the ancient goddess Tonatzin, "Mother of the Gods", whose ruined temple is close to the shrine of the Dark Madonna. The early Franciscan friars tried to teach the Indians new dances adapting the old ones; one of the most widely danced is a symbolical presentation of the coming of Cortes in which the Indians dance the story of their own defeat. Side by side with the religious side of Indian life, Eisenstein sets the customs of Spain. Just as the pre-Christian Mexicans had many ritualistic games, the Spanish brought with them their own—the bullfight. As the most characteristic custom introduced from Spain, Eisenstein makes the bullfight the centre of colonial life. A complete story of bullfighting, its ritualistic technique, the life of the matador, his romances and his superstitions, is woven together not with an actor, but with a bullfighter in the city of Merida. In this episode Eisenstein mixes "acted" scenes with the matador's actual appearance in the bullring during real fights, which he records in minute detail.

From the symbolical and religious he turns to the simple



life of Tehuantepec, centering his story around the intricate wedding customs and the gaiety of a race who were never more than superficially influenced by Spain, and who, isolated in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, remained a free community unique in Mexico as being an official matriarchy. In this cycle Eisenstein creates a mood entirely unlike any other film he has ever made. He is neither symbolical, dramatic, nor ironic; he is concerned with a very simple document and treats it with unexpectedly gentle humour and the languorous quality of this gay tropical district. Eisenstein's work always ruthless suddenly becomes romantic and devoid of any conflict, unless it is by contrast. The Tehuantepec episode is like a breathing spell between the profoundly symbolical feeling of the earlier parts of the film, and the tragic story of peonage which follows. Freedom is set against slavery; the luxuriant tropics against the arid plantations.

The story of the hacienda in *Thunder Over Mexico* is well known, and though much of the documentary life of the hacienda as it still is to-day was left out of the Hollywood edited film, for example, the pulque industry, and the actual Corpus Christi fiesta as it is yearly celebrated on the particular hacienda of Tetlepayac, where Eisenstein took the film, and was replaced for no obvious reason by dances belonging to other fiestas, the skeleton of the story remains although unrelated to the film as a whole. When I visited Tetlepayac I found the documentary background unchanged, and five hundred Indians still living within the enormous courtyard like a feudal village. These Indians

had been Eisenstein's "actors"; though no longer peons they are the labourers of the hacienda, the descendants of the Aztecs who had been in serfdom for four hundred years. The Spaniards of the film were the owner, Senor Julio Saldivar, and his friends. The Revolution which was not completed was to have developed out of the cruelty that the peons suffered on the estates. Incidentally, the burying of the peons in *Thunder Over Mexico* was common practice; while there are isolated cases of them having been trampled to death. From the uncompleted sequence modern Mexico was to have emerged.

Modern Mexico, as it is in every part of the country except villages so remote as to be absolutely inaccessible, is an astounding mixture of ancient and modern. But there is no single celebration which is more symbolical of the spirit of Mexico, its deep symbolism, its strange ironies, its gaiety and its sombreness, than the Day of the Dead in which the Christian festival of All Soul's Day has been blended with the ancient Aztec cult of the dead. This day of "happy mourning", or rather of keeping the dead company, of laughing at death and burlesquing the most august living by showing them in the Press as death's heads, contains all of Mexico, the past, present and future; and as such Eisenstein recorded it with great beauty mixed with an irony only equalled by the Mexicans themselves. This wonderful and profound final episode, which Eisenstein planned to cross-cut with the most contemporary aspects of 1930-31 Mexico, is the one which at present there is a possibility of being returned to him in Moscow as it is the one which

he desires to keep as a record of his film *Viva Mexico*.

Before concluding it may be interesting to mention certain peculiarities of Eisenstein's direction and Tisse's camera work. With the exception of perhaps 5,000 feet, their material shot in 1930-31 has not in the least dated. Those sections which have dated and now appear to be artificial are in every case those in which more sophisticated characters appear. Some sections of the material, either retakes or duplicates, are over exposed, but this curiously enough only occurs in easy scenes; and it can be said that the more difficult the camera work, the better Tisse handles it. In the case of architecture, chiefly church architecture, and sculpture, Tisse's camera work has enhanced the beauty of the original to an amazing degree. A short section of the film, 2,000 feet recording the Oaxaca earthquake, proves that the collaboration between Eisenstein and Tisse is of the greatest importance. This sequence was shot by Eisenstein himself, and as camera work it must be admitted that it is the worst in the whole film. The study of the unedited material is of great interest because it shows how the director foresees the continuity of a sequence, and shoots all-important scenes from at least half a dozen set-ups as well as alternative takes. For certain scenes he uses some very remarkable tracking shots, and these too were taken from many angles. The material also reveals certain eccentricities, for example, the enormous footage of many entirely static shots such as sculpture, architectural details and Indian types. Nevertheless, Eisenstein actually shot practically nothing which was not related directly to the pattern of the whole film. The unedited material also shows

what immense care and profundity he gives to the composition of every scene, and how through composition he intended to give this diverse film a unity.

In this brief account of the main episodes of this gigantic film, which is nothing short of an encyclopædia of cinema (with an infinite number of links and interweaving scenes, which I, not being able to place with any accuracy, have not mentioned), its scope and depth is only suggested. Because no one but the director could give it the unity with which it was conceived, it can only remain a great unfinished work. But that it should not have been edited by Sergei Eisenstein is one of the great, if not the greatest losses of the cinema, for this material which breaks every rule of the cinema, and goes far beyond anything Eisenstein attempted before, could have been a film as revolutionary to the cinema as *Potemkin*. As it is, all that remains are many great scenes, some of which have been edited by people who claimed to have known what was intended, but did not understand the nature of Eisenstein ideas, and myself and Paul Burnford, who know that we do not understand the director's intentions, and, therefore, can only present the merest shadow of the original conception, and that only because it is in the material itself. It has been said that Sergei Eisenstein fell in love with Mexico, but his love of the country was discriminating and only recorded that which is characteristic of the essence of Mexico; and so deeply did he get under the skin of Mexico that when the Mexicans who worked for him speak of the film they say that Eisenstein revealed Mexico to them as it had never been revealed to them before.





Prisioneros de la Tierra

Pampa Films, Argentina

THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC AND ITS FILM INDUSTRY

"There is nothing left of Spain in this country but its language and churches, and soon we will have four cinemas to one church." So said an old resident of Buenos Aires to WILLIAM G. HURRIE, who writes this interesting article

TO SOME people the Argentine Republic will appear as remote and almost as mythical as Atlantis. To others it will be known as the country which exports chilled meat to Europe. This, of course, is a pity, for the time will come when the limelight of world interest will begin to play rather emphatically on the Argentine.

It is a country with a European *façade* where one is less prone to accept that one is in South America. Willy-nilly one thinks of the dead civilisation of the Aztecs and the past glory of the Incas of Peru. But the Argentine is not Peru. The pristine native has been an insignificant factor in the national history of the Argentine. Its history is young and it has no ruins of archæological interest which have so thrilled the lovers of antiquity in Mexico.

The Argentine with its sky-scrapers and modernistic trend can only bring to one's mind the *tempo* of the Western World. Actually it is Buenos Aires that one really refers to when one speaks of the social and visual im-

pressions of the Argentine. For Buenos Aires is the heart of the country.

Whether, fortunately or unfortunately, the impressionable measure of such a young land as the Argentine must necessarily succumb to a good deal of the stereotyped ideas injected into it by the film factories of Hollywood. For Hollywood productions reign supreme in the life of the average Argentine.

To elucidate this point, an analysis of cinema-going in the Argentine is necessary. Where the Londoner, for instance, can escape into the countryside in less than half-an-hour either by Green Line coach, bus or train, the citizen of Buenos Aires seems doomed to the unending whirligig of city life. There are several reasons for this: there is little or no attractive countryside in the environs of Buenos Aires. The land is either flat or too underdeveloped. One must not forget also that the Argentine theatre is such a still voice at the moment that the cinemas,

which can comfortably house the million dollar productions of North America, are the strongest gravitational points for diversion. A Pharaoh built pyramids as testimony to his greatness. Nowadays it seems that a country erects its glamorous movie-palaces for an identical reason. It is no exaggeration to say that some of the cinemas in Buenos Aires would seem as neoteric as the next year's limousine in comparison to many of London's cinemas.

Thus the needs of the Argentine cinema-goer are satisfied in a generous manner. It would seem inconceivable to him that he should pay more than two shillings for the best seat in a cinema. And the average price for the same coveted seat is about fivepence. For that he expects (and receives) a lengthy programme and the attendant comforts of a super-cinema.

In the majority of cinemas there is no continuous programme; the "sectional system" has always prevailed. For example, 2.30 to 5.30 is the *seccion matinee*, 6 to 8 o'clock is the *seccion vermouth* (a fashionable early evening section, during which a few short and the latest released feature films are shown) and from 8.30 to well past midnight in some cases is the *seccion noche*. This latter section constitutes as many as three feature films. At a time when the West End of London begins to yawn and relapses into a sluggish tempo, it is no unusual sight to see many of the citizens of Buenos Aires pour out like a warm stream from the cinemas and clog the ever-humming streets like Lavalle, Maipo, Corrientes and Esmeralda. And the task of building more and more super-cinemas still goes on.

I have often wondered whether the Church or the Cinema will triumph in this young republic. Other observers have noticed the beginnings of important cultural tendencies here. From my own experience, I discerned a specifically French influence here many years ago. But I feel that this Gallic influence has been submerged in recent years. The shadow of Hollywood falls rather heavily over the lives of the Argentine people.

"There is nothing left of Spain in this country but its language and churches, and soon we will have four cinemas to one church," an old resident of Buenos Aires once said to me as we were watching the Rex Cinema disgorge its audience on to Calle Corrientes on a Sunday afternoon after the *seccion vermouth*. "It is no longer the thing to attend a fashionable church in a carriage and pair with all the dignity of old Spain," this particular individual went on. The statement was like an accusation. "To-day one goes to the cinema while a huge underground garage looks after your car as you enjoy the programme."

As I looked at the Rex Cinema's garage vomiting the latest streamlined automobiles, I, like my acquaintance, was conscious of the birth of a new phase and the death of the old. . . .

Rather self-determined in many ways, the average Argentine seeks to develop native propensities. For as a

nation the Argentine Republic is becoming increasingly self-conscious. Like a wave, cultural self-determination seems to be sweeping the Argentine now. Some people consider that approximately fifty per cent of the people of the Republic are either Italian or of Italian descent. If that is true, it is safe to surmise that a good deal of the Argentine national and cultural outlook will have a quasi-Italian colour.

It is this same national outlook that makes the Argentine feel that his country will be the hub of the Latin-American film industry. He visualises the day when Spanish films produced in Argentine studios will seep through the whole of the huge South American continent from Chile to Peru, Equador to Colombia, and Uruguay to Paraguay. . . .

There are some who would not share this optimism, however. The selective powers of the Argentine in the way of film taste are not yet very highly developed. In other countries one has witnessed the growth of a small but coherent minority which endeavours to fly the banner of progressiveness in the film sphere; it is a minority which sees new horizons among the possibilities of celluloid. So far, such a minority has not taken root in the Argentine. This does not imply that certain individuals who see the cinema as something more than a soporific do not exist in the Argentine. One can only make one's analysis from that which manifests itself.

The documentary film movement, for instance, has been almost still-born in this country. Films like *Nanook* and *Man of Aran* by Robert Flaherty, not only flopped, but were distinctly unpopular. Ernest Hemingway's *Spanish Earth*, despite its topical value was subjected to an equally inglorious fate; in fact, I doubt whether this film was commented on by any of the newspapers. The *documentales* move in a shadow of suspicion and neglect here. Perhaps those who know so much of the brilliance and insight that has been discharged into the field of the English documentary film movement, are apt to be disappointed in surveying the production and public reaction to documentary films in other countries. Even North America's efforts in this direction have been infantile compared with those of the documentary film units in England.

No, the Argentine has not produced documentary craftsmen like Grierson, Cavalcanti and Wright. If and when men like that were to arise in the Argentine, they would probably be subjected to many difficulties.

In 1938 I made my first documentary in the Argentine. For three weeks my shooting schedule was neutralised owing to the fact that the people who had been ordered to give me every assistance by the sponsors of the film, went to a vast amount of trouble and expense in arranging for me to shoot subject matter that was irrelevant. The theme of the film was the production of fruit in the Valley of the Rio Negro. I had a deep feeling of isolation in the making

of this film, not because it was difficult to find good technical assistants and laboratories, but because I could only find collaboration on relatively trivial matters. I returned to Buenos Aires after shooting with thousands of feet of unnecessary film. While finally editing I pacified most of my collaborators by presenting them with the shots I did not use. They were flattered; no one had any regrets; and finally the completed film convinced the more serious-minded of my sponsors that the story of the Rio Negro Valley could be told in the language of film.

One is not being scornful of the filmic possibilities of the Argentine when one says that her seemingly unending leagues of flat country form a monotonous contrast to the green vegetation of Brazil or the wonderfully undulating country of Uruguay. This is said from the documentary film point of view. For instance, the earnest and rather spectacular filmic vision of a Dziga Vertoff is less likely to be satisfied in the Argentine than in a country like Mexico. And in talking of Mexico one remembers how Eisenstein succumbed to the magnificence of that Central American Isthmus.

I searched for many months for worth-while subjects in the Argentine. I had ample facilities for doing this, since I had a free pass on any railway of the Republic. I also had ample technical facilities. As a result of my quest, I consider that I made a successful documentary film of the wonderful irrigation system of the Rio Negro Valley. It might interest documentary producers to learn that, according to my experience, the cost of producing a documentary film in the Argentine is approximately 50 per cent cheaper than in England.

One hopes that some day the production of documentary films will take root in the Argentine and, as far as one can tell, its immense possibilities may first be recognised by educationalists. At the moment fiction films are being swallowed wholesale. Sometimes they are not properly digested. Films like *Intolerance*, *Foolish Wives*, *Sunrise*, *Potemkin*, *Mother*, *Metropolis* and *Caligari*, have not had the magnetic gravitational power in the Argentine as I imagine they must have had in other countries. It is no exaggeration to say that to many cinemagoers categories of quality in fiction films are non-existent. They are just as pleased with *Vogues of 1938* or the latest Darryl Zanuck musical comedy.

At this juncture perhaps I ought to stress the importance of the serious critic as an arbiter of film trends and taste. Unfortunately there are very few outstanding critics to help the selectiveness of the Argentine cinemagoer. Most newspaper reports of films bristle with eulogies containing recurring phrases like *formidable*, *de primera* or *un gran éxito*. The same thing, of course, often happens in the press of other countries.

Five years ago, those financial interests that saw in

national Argentine film production a new Eldorado, embarked on the hazardous waters of film production. The initial results were almost catastrophic in a technical sense. The photography and sound were sadly insufficient. One could not see and hear well. There were hardly any film craftsmen here; the public, lulled and spoilt by Hollywood productions, did not seem over-anxious to patronise films in their own language; and difficulties of distribution threatened the whole issue of national film production. But the first shock of failure has not destroyed activities in the Argentine-manufactured film. On the contrary, at the present, a nationalistic wave and certain adjustments in studio personnel, have rekindled activities in this direction. Like the incorrigible gambler, the film financier again tries his luck in the lottery of film production.

To understand the commercial difficulties in launching Spanish-speaking films in South America, one could do worse than to examine the trend of the cinema in the Argentine since the advent of sound. The first talkies that were projected onto the screens of the Argentine cinemas were, in reality, silent editions of talking films with a musical background. When an attempt was made at dubbing English-speaking films into Spanish, the *criollo* (i.e., the native of the Argentine) was genuinely nonplussed. The system of sub-titling seemed infinitely more preferable. As long as the dynamics of action and the language of images were not interfered with, the Argentine cinemagoer was quite reconciled to witnessing films where the characters spoke in a different language.

(Incidentally it is considered *chic* and *de rigueur* for a well-educated Argentine to speak English. Apart from its value in the sphere of commerce, a speaking knowledge of English is a most coveted accomplishment as a cultural attribute and because of its use in the majority of the Argentine cinemas.)

Rather paradoxically, the Argentine cinemagoer's attitude to sound or rather the intellectual statement of the speaking voice is at the same time proof of an antiquated and progressive attitude to the cinema; antiquated, because he does not appear to have grown out of the aura of the silent film, and progressive because he concentrates chiefly on the plot development of a film by following the visual language.

In the early days of the talkies, Ernesto Vachalles, a Spanish actor, made three or four Spanish films which had been adapted from English plays. After seeing these films, I was hopeful that something momentous would develop from this chrysalis state of the Spanish-speaking film. Vachalles was not an Argentine, and his work was carried out in Spain. I have not heard of him or his work since. Can one surmise that the recent tragic events in Spain have something to do with this? Civil wars have often destroyed the creative simmerings of a nation, for a time at least.

About two or three years after the appearance of Vachalles' efforts, a Spanish talkie called *Luces de Buenos Aires* was produced in Buenos Aires. At the same period a tango film emerged from the Argentine; it was called *Tango Bar*. In talking of the tango and its relationship to the make-up of the Argentine people, one touches on one of the nerve-centres of the Argentine national outlook. Some details about the tango are necessary here.

The history of the tango in the Argentine has always been connected with dancing in water-front cafés and gaffs; moreover, it has been woven into the life of the water-front people who live in that part of Buenos Aires known as the *Boca*. (A literal translation of *boca* is "mouth.") The inhabitants of the *Boca*, the *malevo*, is one of its main types and can be compared to the Paris *apache*. Yet this Argentine type differs from his French counterpart in that he does not appear to have the romance or daring to apply that much caricatured sadism towards his girl-friend when the occasions should arise.

The Argentine pseudo-*apache* struts the water-front in a tight black suit with a white muffler rolled around his neck. He dances in the bars of the *Boca* with his *mina*, but always seems to be having trouble with his unfaithful *mueble* (literal meaning of *mueble* is a piece of furniture and is used in defining the *malevo's* girl-friend) and is generally in such a state of depression that he cannot face work and the deeper realities of life. Although he seems attached to his guitar, he very rarely learns to master it. And when he sings it appears that the whole melancholy of the planet is emanating from his throat. Perhaps psychologists might call him a neurotic.

Not all the sentimental dribble that has come from the music parlours of America can match the tango music for dullness. Many people have compared it to the blues, but that is fallacious, in my opinion. The tango has a sordid nature; further, its exponents seem to adhere to a morbid sentimentality which is almost the antithesis to modern swing music. The dance itself would be incomplete without the attendant lowering of lights and that surreptitious, slinking movement of seductive character which is coupled with a bored expression on the faces of the dancers.

The *Bandoneon*, known as the windjammer, is an essential part of the tango orchestra. It is not quite like the accordion; in fact, it is built in a totally different way from the accordion and is little known outside the Argentine.

For some time films which featured and carried as their *leitmotif* the tango with all its attendant associations, were produced by many film companies. They were more successful in the camp (which in the Argentine means the country) and in suburbs than in the more sophisticated atmosphere of Buenos Aires. I believe that these films ultimately made profit.

Soon after came an attempt to lift the Argentine film out

of the aura of the tango. Tentatively, society dramas were tried out, but the insufficiency of the Argentine scenarists was very apparent in these. The dialogue in these films was too long and boring. Films as vehicles for the *Gaucha* tradition were tried out as well. These, no doubt, found appreciative audiences in the camp. Another trend in film story material was and is the struggle for Argentine independence. *Viento Norte* and *Cuesta Abajo* belong to this category.

In the old German film school and the present-day French films, ideas and technique have been moulded by tradition and the European assimilation of ancient and modern art-forms. A vast background of ideas seems to be necessary in creating any peculiar and individual film school. So far the Argentine cannot provide these prerequisites. That is why many of their nationally-produced films seem a little pretentious and not worthy of serious criticism. But, after all is said and done, cannot one say almost the same thing about a good many of the films that England produced during the last boom in English film production?

One must remember that the Argentine is so engrossed in the process of becoming a nation that it is understandable why she cannot reap very much at the moment from the soil of science and the arts. But that, one feels, must inevitably come. . . .

It would be futile to deny that the North American social aura (its lavishness, sophistication and *tempo*, etc.), has firmly sealed itself on the life of the Argentine people. In that sense the average Argentine succumbs to a North American outlook *via* the celluloid worlds fabricated in Hollywood. The Argentine cinemagoer will rarely patronise national films unless they are as lavish as Hollywood productions. Those who understand the moods of the English cinemagoers will be able to appreciate this fact. As far as the Argentine is concerned, however, film producers cannot offer Hollywood ingredients.

The future of Spanish-speaking films therefore is still in the balance. To wrest from Hollywood her ascendancy will require more than financial resources. It will require a film movement that is inspired by nothing less than genius. It is not out of place to say that the same moral could be applied to England.

The pioneers of the cinema seem like intractable ghosts in this period of the stereotyped film. Not only in the Argentine, but in other countries, too, men of vision and freshness are needed in the film art-form. For a plateau has been reached in film development, and in recent years only the documentary films and probably the Disney *Silly Symphonies* have endeavoured to make film progress. What happens to the development of the film medium concerns us all, since the way films are made seemingly patterns our way of living.



The Wizard of Oz

M.G.M.

GLORY'S END

Most of them have found a refuge in Hollywood, the members of that memorable band who once earned for the German film the admiration of the world. HERMAN G. WEINBERG tells you in this American letter what they are doing now, and adds a postscript on censorship

IF THE GERMAN film industry is sterile (even Hitler does not like the current crop of Nazi movies), German chemists continue their penchant for the miraculous by bringing forth a metal film that is vastly less perishable than the present celluloid variety, that has far greater tensile strength, that will permit the printing of two separate films on one roll of stock, using both reverse and obverse sides of the film, and that can be produced at a fraction of the cost of celluloid film. (Messrs. Dupont and Eastman take notice!) Much less power, resulting in a more brilliant image than is now possible, is required for the metal film's projection. But Karl Freund is in Hollywood and Murnau is dead and Bergner, Pabst, Lang and the rest of that memorable company have fled, so what's the use of even a miracle if it has to be shared with Goebbels?

Erno Metzner, Pabst's erstwhile set-designer, has come here and Richard Oswald has been here for some time. Hans Schwarz and Dupont were relegated to second-rate stuff in Hollywood, as was Thiele, and of these three brilliant names in the former German *kino*, only Dupont salvaged something from the wreck by turning magazine editor. His weekly publication, *The Hollywood Tribune*, is

just the antidote Hollywood needs to counteract the intellectual vacuum that has made the air there too rarified to breath for so many sensitive folk. From Lang the silence continues, as it does from Schuenzel, and Machaty has been "demoted" to doing shorts, while his protégée, Hedy Lamarr, has skyrocketed to fame, but then, Machaty isn't nearly as good looking as she is. Lorre, disgusted with the *Mr Moto* series, is collaborating with Hans Rameau on *Jack-the-Ripper*, which he hopes, optimistically, he will be allowed to play. (Gustav Diesel did a memorable "Jack" in the early Pabst *Pandora's Box*.) Feher and Twardowsky, who played the two students in *Caligari*, are also here, the former as a director of musical shorts and the latter as an actor (in *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*). There are others—actresses, too—cameramen, composers, scenarists, scene designers (but not Herlth and Röhrig, alas!)—refugees all, doing their best in the face of great odds and heart-breaking competition. And those that aren't yet here are still in England, or France.

But if Hollywood won't give its refugees a chance, it is, at least, giving itself every opportunity to make 1940 a memorable year as far as the purely native product is

concerned. The forthcoming feature-length animated cartoons in colour, *Gulliver's Travels*, from Max Fleischer, and *Pinnocchio*, from Walt Disney (about which Mr. Richard Watts, drama editor of the *Herald Tribune*, having seen some of the rushes, has gone into ecstasy) bid fair to vie with Chaplin's eagerly awaited *Dictator* as the crowning achievements of a year that will be rich in comedy. Lubitsch is sure to add to the gaiety of the scene with Garbo as a comedienne in *Ninotchka*, as will Disney with his subsequent concert feature done in collaboration with Stokowski, and so, no doubt, will Capra with *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. And, if all this isn't funny enough for you, contemplate the news that Dietrich will appear in a "western" called *Destry Rides Again*.

On the more sober side, *Gone With the Wind*, in Technicolor, will run for three and a half hours; the Chase National Bank, which controls Twentieth Century Fox, is doing its best to prevent the filming of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*; other interests are seeing to it that Vincent Sheehan's *Personal History* emerges as another *Beau Geste*, rather than anything else; and D. W. Griffith is reported returning to the films as director again, which is inevitably destined to be one of those classic slips "tween the cup and the lip," unless a miracle happens and Hollywood proves that lightning *can* strike twice in the same place.

Of the new American films that have made their appearance since the last quarter, there's not much to be said after one mentions the school-boyish *Beau Geste*, the flagrant distortion of fact in the ending of the otherwise meritorious *Stanley and Livingstone*, the "Lubitschean" curtain line to *Bachelor Mother* that will cause eyebrows to be lifted from Bangor to Bangkok, and the new Goldwyn picture which, according to the anecdote, "was supposed to make Heifetz famous." *They Shall Have Music*, it's called, but they shall not have a very good picture and if Heifetz had been anybody else it would have been too bad all around. As it is, if you can keep from squirming through an hour of incredible tripe for the sake of, perhaps, a half hour of empyrean fiddling by the one man who can make it hot for all other violinists, this is your dish—and weirdly served up it is, too.

The rest has to do with the ubiquitous censors, who have at this moment, made themselves eternally ridiculous in New York by banning Pagnol's lovely and fragile *Harvest*. "Immoral and would tend to corrupt morals." A story, almost, of the first man and first woman, and this earth upon which they found themselves, it transforms its detractors into swine. Smirking Hollywood films, that are pornographic by comparison with this exultant little idyll of Giono, are passed by the censors every day. If *Harvest*, surely the most innocent and guileless film ever made, could corrupt anyone's morals because the man and woman are not shown getting married, such a person would seem



The Wizard of Oz

M.G.M.

to reflect singular experiences and/or desires and needs protection from others.

What like fate awaits Pagnol's marvellously witty *La Femme du Boulanger*, which has just arrived here, can be imagined. Already, the French Embassy has protested against the banning of *Harvest* and there are dark rumours of "retaliation" if the American censors don't stop reading dirty meanings into every important French film that is sent over. That won't be the first time an international "incident" was precipitated by someone's stupidity.

At any rate, the French carry on, bless them. Now that they have been able, finally, to stop their howls of laughter at Hollywood's pathetic attempt to do Zola's *Nana* (remember it?—the Anna Sten—Dorothy Arzner "version"), they have announced Viviane Romance as Zola's little trollop—and trump that, you Hollywood casting directors, if you can!

IT APPEARS that the omission of the Soviet film from the cycle presented by the Museum of Modern Art Film Library this season is not as "inexplicable" as I intimated in the last quarter. The Film Library's able curator, Miss Iris Barry, has informed me that the following quotation from the preface to the film section of the Museum's catalogue, *Art in our Time*, explains the "inexplicable", to wit: "There are some obvious omissions, such as the lack of Russian films. This will be remedied when the Film Library next year adds to its circulating programmes the group of pictures from pre-revolutionary Russia and the U.S.S.R. which it has acquired."



The Rains Came

20th Century Fox

ART SUSPENDED

by ALAN PAGE

AT ANY TIME it requires a high degree of concentration to take films seriously. Years of striving and experiment have brought the cinema only to the suburbs of art, and even that advance has demanded a good deal of wishful thinking from the faithful. Theirs has been a hard fought battle, waged against the escapists, the half educated dupes of the star system and the manufacturers of mass-production anæsthetics. It is a melancholy thought that the battle will now have to be suspended, pending the outbreak of peace. For one of the greater evils of war is that it demands an undivided attention; it battens down the hatches on the mind.

Entertainment, of course, will and must go on. The public mind must have some relief from the monotony of speculating about the probable course of the war and of brooding over its horrors. And so we are bound to have films designed solely to cheer us up and to relieve us from all necessity of thinking. This is perfectly right but it is hard luck on those who have been striving for the recognition of the cinema as an art. They will now have to content themselves with the documentary. Restriction of hours will do away with that curse, the double feature

programme, so that there should now be room for at least two documentaries in every programme. I hope the Government will do all in its power to encourage the production of this type of film. It will benefit both the country and the film industry, the former by the unique way in which a documentary can plead a cause and enlighten the public, and the latter by ensuring the continuance and development of a branch of the industry that has already done so much to give dignity and purpose to the cinema.

But to return to the entertainment films. Where are we going to get them from? Hollywood is the obvious answer, but it is a very short-sighted one, and I am not sure that it is not also more desirable in view of the present circumstances that the British studios should provide our entertainment. This is not merely a matter of self-sufficiency, but one of policy in which we should be guided by the lesson of the last war. Prior to 1914 British films were in a flourishing state, but the subsequent four years gave Hollywood a lead which took us until 1939 to catch up with. Film making is a business in which, on the technical side alone, long training and experience is essential. On



The Rains Came

20th Century Fox

the other, and more intangible, side of direction and production matured judgment is an added essential, and in the British studios this has only lately been acquired after a painful period of chaotic extravagance and opportunism. If the fullest possible use is not now made of trained personnel of our industry then the end of this war will see us back in the 1919 position. It may be argued that the film industry manufactures only a luxury product. Sleep is also a luxury, and none the less necessary for that!

Of the films seen last quarter the one that I should recommend most in war-time would be *Bachelor Mother*, and least *Each Dawn I Die*. Were we at peace the reverse would be the case. *Bachelor Mother* is the lightest of light-hearted comedies, designed purely to amuse and succeeding very pleasantly. Whoever wrote the script is—or more probably are—to be congratulated on the dexterity in which one time-worn joke has been made to provide all the laughs. I should never have thought it possible to laugh for well over an hour at the complications arising out of an unwanted baby and its unwilling “mother”. Ginger Rogers plays the mother and runs through the whole gamut of her facial expression from A to C very prettily, while David Niven has obviously made a close and profitable study of the comedy technique of William Powell, Franchot Tone and Gary Cooper. It should also be recorded that this film does for the screen what *Pygmalion* did for

the stage. It adds a new word to the licensed vocabulary, only this time instead of being a swear-word it is a part of the human anatomy.

Each Dawn I Die seems to have been designed mainly to exploit the toughness of James Cagney and George Raft. It is a grim story, prefaced by an admission that such things could not happen here, about life in an American prison with Cagney as a victimised reporter and Raft as a gangster who helps him establish his innocence. In the search for justice they both have to serve spells in the dark cell—the most dreaded punishment of any convict—until a final tear gas battle proves that Cagney has been the victim of a frame-up and that Raft has that perverse streak of honesty that distinguishes all the leading American gangster heroes. The sum total is a ruthlessly well-made film that will put even the most brightly moonlit black-out in the shade.

A film shown last quarter that will now have enhanced excitement is *Q Planes*. This is a mystery, treated in the fashionably light style, dealing with the tracking down of a gang of crooks who are causing new and secret bombers to disappear on their test flights. It was made for a British studio by an American director and it has that great actor, Ralph Richardson, in the leading part.

Spencer Tracy is a good actor and, in my opinion, Sir Cedric Hardwicke is not. They can be seen playing Stanley and Livingstone in the film of that name and, again in my opinion, there can be no doubt about which is the good actor and which the bad. Hardwicke, it is true, has the disadvantage of having to wear a fantastic Victorian railway porter's cap and to conduct his native pupils in a swing version of ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’. Tracy has his difficulties, too, for he has to act his way through millions of beads of perspiration that are supposed to represent fever, and also, most exacting of all, he has to appear convincing in back projection, of which there is plenty. But in spite of all these handicaps he is magnificent, loyally interpreting Hollywood's version of history so that Stanley's discovery of Livingstone is made out to be the greatest scoop of modern (nineteenth century) journalism, and epoch-making for that reason only. What this film would have been like without Tracy's anchoring artistic integrity, I shudder to think.

There are signs that Dick Powell is learning that comedy consists of rather more than a succession of grimaces, as witness *Naughty But Nice*, an efficiently unimportant musical. This can safely be recommended for war-time entertainment, since it contains plenty to amuse and nothing whatever to excite thought. The plot is not very remarkable but the trimmings are excellent, consisting as they do of Helen Broderick wisecracks, Allen Jenkins inanities and Zasu Pitts flutterings. There is also “oomph” in the person of Ann Sheridan. What more could one want?



THE GREAT

BEAR MARCHES

In his review of the quarter's Continentals ARTHUR VESSELO observes that Stalin's curious policy had been prophesied in many recent Russian films. The still opposite shows Somonov in the part of Peter the Great

SINCE THE last issue of this magazine, the strange confusion of War has descended upon Europe—of a War in which every next step is as apparently unpredictable as every previous move has been in its way surprising. Yet at each moment there have been signs and omens in the air for the perspicacious to interpret; and even in our own field, that of films, such signs and omens have been abundantly present.

From Russia, converted swiftly and tremendously by events into the arbiter of European destinies, there has come to us during the last few years a limited but steady flow of films in which political changes have been clearly readable, though their final implications may still be difficult to decipher. Nobody who has seen these films, and watched attentively their altered emphasis—embracing a growing technical approximation to the American model, a distinct softening of attitude towards the old Russia, and a subtle general revision of tone and mood and ideology—can view the present world-situation, and the part played in it by Russia in particular, with that extreme astonishment affected by some. Stalinism and Leninism are evidently two considerably different things.

Our review of *Peter the Great* in the summer number, sent to press well before the announcement of the Nazi-Soviet pact, was appropriate to the occasion, and reads now almost like a prediction. In fact, a glorification of that violent and brutal tyrant, a man well-endowed at the same time with political cunning, is on the face of it so like a glorification of the ideas for which Hitler himself stands that the inferences drawn in these columns become obvious. From that aspect, there is nothing essentially contradictory about the Nazi-Soviet *rapprochement*. Personal dictatorship is personal dictatorship, in whatever camp it sits, and two representatives of the class can always temporarily join hands if it suits their immediate purpose.

Nevertheless, it would be foolish to leap from this to the

conclusion that Hitlerism and Stalinist Communism are only nominally at variance, or that Russia is now completely Nazified—if only because the actual origins and material environment of the two systems are so vastly different. This is not the place to discuss politics at large, or to go into an analysis of recent events; but we may do worse than to examine briefly some of the relevant implications of our latest Russian import, Pyriev's *The Rich Bride*.

This is a musical comedy of life on a collective farm in the Ukraine at harvest-time. Romantic simplification is the keynote of the plot, and American influences, in technique and otherwise, are obvious. There is an incredibly hearty atmosphere about the film: it is hard to believe that even in the Soviet Union everyone is so consistently gay and jolly all the time. Inevitably one recalls the mass-atmosphere of an American college-film, with its synthetic romances, rivalries and revelries. A sophisticated West-European audience is hardly likely to take this kind of thing very seriously, even though technically it is extremely efficient (and the music is really well assimilated to the mood); but probably the most important point about it ultimately is not so much what it is as what it stands for—as a type.

Here once more is the heroic tractor of silent days, the symbol of a newly mechanized agricultural community, and here is the purely internal class of propaganda whose purpose, superabundantly plain, is to encourage the peasantry to vigorous team-work in order to increase Russia's home-productivity. We are thus presented with another side to the political picture—an illuminating supplement to that presented in *Peter the Great*.

We cannot doubt that a great part of Russia's effort to-day is still concerned with the ends emphasised by *The Rich Bride*: that is to say, with the satisfaction of Russia's internal needs from her own as yet incompletely-tapped resources. To a nation in this condition, external involve-

ments (to use a Rooseveltian word) are presumably subsidiary; and while moral scruples or ideologies are unlikely to stand in the way of opportunism, it is equally unlikely that such opportunism should take on the aggressive madness of the crumbling and desperate Nazi organism. The force that works for fuller development within is at least a powerful counterforce to that which works for possible aggrandizement without.

The remaining half-dozen films of the quarter are all French—it is difficult to imagine what else they could be at this juncture. Their relatively small number is due to the brake applied to cinema-performances at the beginning of the War. The psychological state in which we were living before War finally broke upon us is strikingly reflected in the fact that of these six films only one has in it no mention of modern warfare: four are intimately concerned with it, and one, *Les Disparus de St. Agil*, has nothing fundamentally to do with it but contains a character who is perpetually referring in gloomy tones to the probability of "la guerre".

Christian Jacque's *Un de la Légion* and Paulin's *Trois de St. Cyr* are films which fall neatly into companion subdivisions of the same "soldier-pals-together-in-the-desert" category. *Un de la Légion*, it is true, has Fernandel; but, for all that, it is not definable as a Fernandel-vehicle. Those who remember *Ignace* may be surprised at the thought that a comic film with Fernandel in the lead could be other than a simple starring-vehicle: to them one answers, "C'est la guerre".

Un de la Légion, in short, is primarily a recruiting-film; and as such it reduces Fernandel to a mere comic cog in its propagandist machinery. The rather strained emphasis upon the comradeship of the lads of the Legion, and upon the Legion's efficacy in turning a weakling into a "man", lays so strong a hold upon the comedy that our funny man is even permitted to be shot in some desert-fighting. He recovers, and is awarded the Legion of Honour as compensation; but the shooting of the funny man remains a shock to the comic conventions. All in all, this is just another Legion-film.

Trois de St. Cyr takes us several steps higher in the social scale, and introduces us to the officer-class in training at the French Sandhurst—or should one rather say, the French West Point? since there are undoubted reminiscences of the thousand-and-one stereotyped American films on the same topic. The social ascent has the effect of removing even the saving grace of humour. Everything is now surrounded with an aura of almost complete solemnity, and the dull, time-weary clichés of action which go to make up the plot are treated as if they were world-shattering in their significance. Production and acting are certainly competent; but the greatest competence could hardly have made this anything but a boring and second-rate film.

In *Le Drame de Shanghai*, directed by G. W. Pabst, we pass from manly soldiering and desert-battles to political intrigues in the Chinese underworld, with Louis Jouvet as a degenerate White Russian exile. The names of Pabst and Jouvet should not awaken too many expectations; for, while this is in general a work of sound craftsmanship, it is not particularly deep, and its aims are confused. In basis, the film is a thriller, and should have been treated quite straightforwardly as such; but the makers have fought shy of self-declared melodrama, and have built up the plot against a wide background of more universal meaning, the effort of the Chinese nation to become free.

That this was a mistake is proved in the result. Profound themes need profound and detailed treatment, unencumbered by purely romantic additions. Here it is never plain what precisely the conflicting political movements in the film represent, and the identity and purpose of the foreign invader who breaks in at the end are diplomatically obscured. On the other side, the fictional plot is made to seem shallower by contrast with the more realistic intrusions from the background, and the whole, though it has its useful points of Pabstian atmosphere, ends up, through this unequal balance of ideas, as a rather uneasy compromise.

The last of the four war-films, Raymond Bernard's *Hostages*, is in a superior class. Its war is that of 1914, but the theme is developed in neither a tragic nor a propagandist sense. On the contrary, though it ranges over an extensive dramatic field, this is essentially comedy. The setting is that of a little hamlet in the north of France; and the film as a whole belongs to a type for which the French have won a deserved reputation, and of which this is as good an example as one might wish. The countryside is finely photographed; the village-personalities—Mayor, local landowner, petty officials, wives, sweethearts—portrayed with that subtle and gently satirical authenticity for which French film-makers are famous; and the total environment reproduced with laudable skill. Here, one feels, is something native to the French soil.

The tale is of the first days of the War, and the village one in the front line, which is taken almost immediately by the enemy. A German officer is killed by a villager, and the invading troops demand five hostages, to be executed if the murderer is not found within twenty-four hours. Up to this point, the Mayor and the most important local landowner have been indulging in a long-drawn feud; but they are the first to offer themselves, and from now on old quarrels are gradually overborne. At the last moment the French retake the village, and all turns out well.

The human defects of the main characters are as faithfully and sympathetically brought out as their virtues, and the dramatic aspects of the plot handled with the minimum of sentimentality. The humorous passages which one remembers best are those where the five hostages are seen marching bravely through the countryside to give themselves up, yet still bickering involuntarily, despite their journey of self-sacrifice; and the revealing passage where, having unexpectedly got off scot-free, they are going back the way they came, espy a crowd of excited villagers coming to meet them, and, mistaking the crowd for Germans, break up in disorder and run.

Occasionally the film descends nearer to the commonplace, and the romantic sub-plot in particular belongs to the popular conventions; but in general this is an excellent piece of work, and the acting of Charpin, Saturnin Fabre, and Larquey, as the Mayor, the landowner, and a hen-pecked little village-official respectively, is extraordinarily effective.

A gift for softly satirical comedy is also evident in the direction of *Les Disparus de St. Agil*, a fantastic thriller of life in a French boys' boarding-school. Although this was made by the director of *Un de la Légion*, the two films have little enough in common. There is more dexterity, and a much freer play of imagination, about *Les Disparus de St. Agil*, which does not suffer from the handicap of a super-imposed propaganda-aim to cramp its style. Admittedly there are certain shortcomings: the film is something



Trois de St. Cyr

too leisurely in getting into its stride, it has an occasional tendency to drop loose ends about the place, and the "surprise"-climax is abrupt, and the way to it too little prepared. But these are structural shortcomings, not basic shortcomings of idea and purpose; and one is the more ready to make allowances for them.

Despite the apparent slowness of some of the preliminary stages, the film has actually plenty of content. The paraphernalia of the plot include a schoolboy secret-society, mysterious disappearances of pupils, a band of forgers eventually rounded up by the boys *en masse*, and a perpetually drunken schoolmaster who is finally murdered. This bare enumeration of the component items should sufficiently dispose of the line of criticism which asserts the action to be "improbable"; for the film is patently intended as fantasy, and as fantasy it stands.

Atmosphere and characterisation are obviously the core of the matter, and both in sum are quite impressive. In places there is a distinct echo of *Zéro de Conduite*. The performances, from children and adults alike, are good. Once more we permit ourselves to remark the lack of self-consciousness with which children are able to throw themselves into their parts; and of the adults, we note inevitably Erich von Stroheim as a gentle but mysterious modern-language master with two pairs of spectacles, and Armand Bernard, whose comic portrayal of the school-factotum is one of the outstanding things in the film.

Last of the quarter's batch is Decoin's *Retour à l'Aube*, from a story by Vicki Baum. This is a mixture, not in basis

harmonious, of comedy and melodrama. The opening scene is a tiny Hungarian village, where the marriage of the stationmaster is being celebrated. His innocent young wife has to pay a visit to Budapest to see about a legacy. She misses her train back, is forced to spend the night in the capital, and in the few hours before morning has a series of hectic adventures which give her enough to remember for a lifetime.

The film has its unquestionably good qualities, but one suspects that they derive from Decoin rather than from Vicki Baum. There is wit and understanding in the establishing of the village-scene, and, though the locale is Hungary, not France, the spirit of the thing is comparable to that of *Hostages*. The quiet and attractive realism of these earlier sequences is, however, converted gradually, after the train-journey to Budapest, into plain melodrama; and, while the presentation is still good, and the director still fundamentally retains his sense of humour, the piling-on of incident becomes unconvincing. The transformation of a simple country-girl into a lady of fashion by a mere change of dress is doubtfully credible; and the tragic love-affair which supervenes, races to its climax too swiftly for words.

Direction and acting nevertheless save the day, and one accepts the weaknesses of the plot as of secondary importance. The versatile Danielle Darrieux breathes life into the little country-girl; Pierre Dux makes us believe in her honest stationmaster-husband; and Pierre Mingand puts some bright comic acting into the rôle of a foppish but good-natured man-about-town.

INDIAN PROGRESS

The first Indian Motion Picture Congress was held in Bombay earlier this year and was a pronounced success. During its 25 years' history the industry in India has made steady progress and many really excellent features are now being turned out. The photographs on the opposite page show: Top left: NEMO and LEELE DESAI in "DUSHMAN" (The Enemy), a New Theatres Film; top right: SAIGAL, one of India's favourite stars; bottom: The Governor of Bombay, Sir Roger Lumley, surrounded by officials just after the opening ceremony



(Above) NAV-JEEVAN (New Life)

Bombay Talkies

(Below) An example of sophisticated comedy

LADIES ONLY

Sagar Movietone





HOLLYWOOD IS WORRIED

The screen capital is experiencing a local war of nerves, according to

EZRA GOODMAN

THE SPARK THAT set off the European conflagration has also kindled a worried look in Hollywood's collective eye. For war, which exerts a profound effect on each of us, usually deals a severe blow to the arts. And the screen, as an international and widespread medium, is no exception.

Already, Paris and to a certain extent London studios are reported to have been closed down so that men and materials might be utilised for the more pressing needs of national defence. And although Hollywood has not gone so far as yet as to shutter its sound stages, the war has caused extensive economy and production curtailment. Bagdad on the Pacific is viewing the European situation with alarm.

The loss of the major portion of its world market has proved a severe blow to American production. With the British and French movie houses cut off for the time being, Hollywood has been deprived of a vital source of income and has to re-adjust itself accordingly. Expenses and production budgets have been heavily cut, and the prevailing opinion is that as long as current conditions exist, the average top budgets will run to only half a million dollars, compared to the previous figure of approximately one million dollars for super-specials.

To achieve this economy, the studios are planning, among other things, to cut star salaries and possibly to adopt a new wage scale for all workers in the industry to conform with the new conditions. At the same time, numerous multi-million dollars epics, scheduled for production, have been shelved in favour of more modest enterprises. Warner Brothers has cancelled *Underground* and *The Bishop Who Walks with God*, both dealing with anti-Hitler themes. The movie moguls are convinced that the public will not be interested in such forbidding themes these days, and so story line-ups have been re-vamped to include more comedies, mysteries and period films.

Other developments include such diverse items as the cancellation of Deanna Durbin's European jaunt, in which she was scheduled to sing a command performance before their Majesties in London. *Scotland Yard* was eliminated from the Twentieth Century-Fox schedule because of the disappearance of the British screen market. Period pieces and costume films are coming into favour again because it is felt that, no matter what to-morrow's headlines may report, such productions will not date. Edward Small, one of the United Artists producers, has halted production entirely, pending future foreign developments. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Twentieth Century-Fox—Hollywood's two richest companies—have also pared their budgets deeply. Joseph M. Schenk, chairman of the Fox board, declared that with sixty per cent of the company's foreign business eliminated, drastic economy at the studio would hold sway henceforth. It has been reported that Fox recently laid off about 300 employees.

Among the independent producers, Charlie Chaplin is sitting back and postponing production on his anti-totalitarian feature, *The Dictators*, until the international

horizon clears. Walt Disney, who derives as much as fifty per cent of his box office from the foreign markets, stands to lose heavily because of the war. His cartoon production of *Pinocchio*, to be released here in December, will not find so great an audience these days as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Meanwhile, not all the companies are crawling under cover. Walter Wanger, for instance, has dusted off Vincent Sheean's *Personal History*, which has been gathering moss for two years, and promises an early filming of the book. The United States Government has requested that two preparedness pictures, M-G-M.'s *Thunder Afloat* and Fox's *20,000 Men a Year* be rushed through as quickly as possible and the studios are co-operating diligently. Even Gene Towne and Graham Baker—Hollywood's Katzenjammer scriptwriters, who have turned staid R.K.O. producers—are hurrying *Swiss Family Robinson* through the mill, so that the picture's message of a return to the primitive life may be relished as soon as possible by harassed moderns.

Another source of cinematic irritation these parlous days has been the possibility that many stars and featured players who are citizens of foreign countries will be called to the colours for their governments. Already, more than 500 individuals, mostly British, have left the studios to enter military service. Among English subjects who may yet be called to arms are Ray Milland, Cary Grant, Errol Flynn, James Whale, Alfred Hitchcock, John Loder, Laurence Olivier, David Niven, Brian Aherne, Richard Greene and Charles Laughton, while Charles Boyer and others are likely to be drafted by France.

Likewise seriously affected by the war are the hundreds of independent movie houses throughout the country which depend for their product largely on imported, foreign films, mostly from France and England. As things stand now, there is a sufficient supply of these pictures on hand to meet the demands of these theatre owners for at least another year. Such French films as *Song of the Streets*, *J'accuse*, *The End of the Day*, *Katia*, *Tarakanova*, *Marseillaise*, *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*, *The Chess Player*, *Louise* and *The Citadel of Silence* are scheduled for release this season. However, four of the outstanding French films—*Harvest*, *The Puritan*, *The Human Beast* and *La Femme du Boulanger*—have been banned by the New York State censor board, although *Harvest* may yet be passed. As a result of this lack of foreign product, independent production of inexpensive, experimental pictures, at such studios as the Eastern Service plant in Astoria, New York, is being pushed. Russian films, normally drawing a small but enthusiastic audience in New York at least, have been hard hit by the Nazi-Soviet pact, which has alienated many movie-goers.

In the course of all this excitement, the Fiftieth Anniversary of Motion Pictures has been relegated to the background. Originated as a promotion scheme for Hollywood, this elaborately planned, nation-wide campaign was intended as a sequel to last year's unsuccessful "Motion Picture's Greatest Year" ballyhoo. There is also talk that Hollywood may yet emerge gainfully from the international holocaust, for it is recalled that the last World War gave the American studios an edge on their idle competitors abroad, and that this head start enabled them to out-distance other countries for many years. But meanwhile, the screen capital, experiencing a local war of nerves, is sitting tight and wondering.

THE MOUNTAIN AND THE SWAN

"In Ireland, praise be, ideas good or bad have always meant more than banknotes," says PATRICIA HUTCHINS. The still is from the Richard Hayward production "Devil's Rock," an all Irish film with an entire Irish cast



I HAVE NO business, in a way, to write of Irish films. I have seen few of those already produced; I have lived for some years out of the country and am not now actively in touch with many aspects of Irish life.

But this, thank goodness, is not a question of practical politics. I am to write of possibilities, without consideration of production costs, avenues of distribution, the squabble of sound versus silent.

Like Professor Low in his excellent description of a cameraman's adventures on the moon I can leap ahead in time and space, over the inevitable schisms and prejudices to the day when films from Ireland will move, well-cut sequence on sequence, across the screens of our own country and the world.

For the ball is rolling at last. Slowly, almost imperceptively, we are on our way towards a more discerning attitude to the film and its uses.

A committee has been set up by the Government of Eire to report fully on the cinema in all its branches. The need for a more logical censorship from the Catholic viewpoint has been discussed by the Rev. R. S. Devane in a recent series of articles.

Then comes the news that the duty is to be lifted on films "imported by, or on behalf of, a club, society or organisation conducted wholly or mainly for the study of film technique" to quote the *Irish Times* of June 1st.

With so small and scattered a population it would be nonsense to hope for a distinctive genre of our own if it were not for the great audiences of the States and elsewhere for whom all things Irish have a strong appeal. Already the Tourist Association unit have made a number of films on districts famous for their beauty but the intelligent visitor does not live by scenery alone. We must co-ordinate and present in palatable form our history and traditions if we would attract and retain his interest.

There was a moment when the Irish cinema might have sprung to life on an international scale some five years ago when Flaherty drew the intellectuals into the warmth of his enthusiasm. But Flaherty, for all his vitality, had moved too far from his Irish parentage, had touched wider issues than the realistic portrayal of one small island, and, in spite of his romanticism, has never grown a complete, self protective shell against the scepticism of lesser minds.

For reason in the main economic, talent here has come to look abroad for its widest public, and there was no one at that time who saw, with something of the urgency of the English documentary film makers, the means to hand whereby Ireland might be given a new significance.

Yet if only indirectly, Flaherty's influence will be seen to have a definite place in the pattern of things.

So much for the past and immediate present. Let me sidetrack for a moment to a glen in Donegal, below a mountain called Knockalla. No one I asked there seemed to be able to tell me the origin of its name.

In another district as we followed the lovely hills of the Inishowen Peninsula or looked west to Errigal, a local man drew my attention to the distant outline of "the mountain of the swan." I saw at once the wings outspread, the bent curve of the neck, the impression of powerful flight.

Such a name I thought, could not have grown out of mere usage—was it Michael Angelo who could watch the rain complete a picture on a wet stone—for the *visual* perception of a poet lies behind this as so many other place names here.

And it is this question of perception that takes us right to the core of the subject of film production in Eire. We have not yet learnt to look at things in terms of the cinema and to see the film material inherent in our country.

If we are not to add to the travel-interest platitudes of the screen, our directors must bring with them a deep-

rooted sympathy with Irish life and outlook, a certain detachment and a full understanding of their medium.

Known mostly as a literary people, for the plastic arts need the rich soil of security, the best of our writing has always had a spontaneous visual quality and there seems no reason why this should not survive within another form.

This is fine talk! At present the wide use of the film is not much more than a seed ready to germinate out of the fleshy, sticky-sweet fruit of the commercial cinema, which if nothing else has shown how great can be its power.

The problems of highly industrialised countries are, so to speak, ready made. But in Ireland the centuries have not spliced into each other like the continuous thread of English history.

The Gaeltacht is the illustration in many ways to conditions before the Agricultural Revolution. Towns in the provinces still breathe within their own self-centredness: the cities are caught into the pulsation of international, competitive life.

As this unevenness of national development grows on the observer, the cautious attitude of the Church to outside influence takes on a new meaning.

Here we need films to show the rural worker his vital relationship to the town, the townsman his dependence on the country. We need to put our many difficulties before ourselves in terms of men and women, for the camera has no patience with side issues. Like the microphone it shows up the oratorical, plumps for facts and yet insists on their being contained within a general philosophy. In Ireland, praise be, ideas good or bad, have always meant more than banknotes.

Besides the lighter "shorts" for exhibition up and down the country in village halls and local societies, we need dramatic films on great national efforts such as the development of vocational education, social services, marketing and housing.

Some of these, if competently produced, can be of universal application. I can imagine for instance, no better

background than ours for a film that sometime must surely be tackled, showing the question of re-afforestation to be a vital issue.

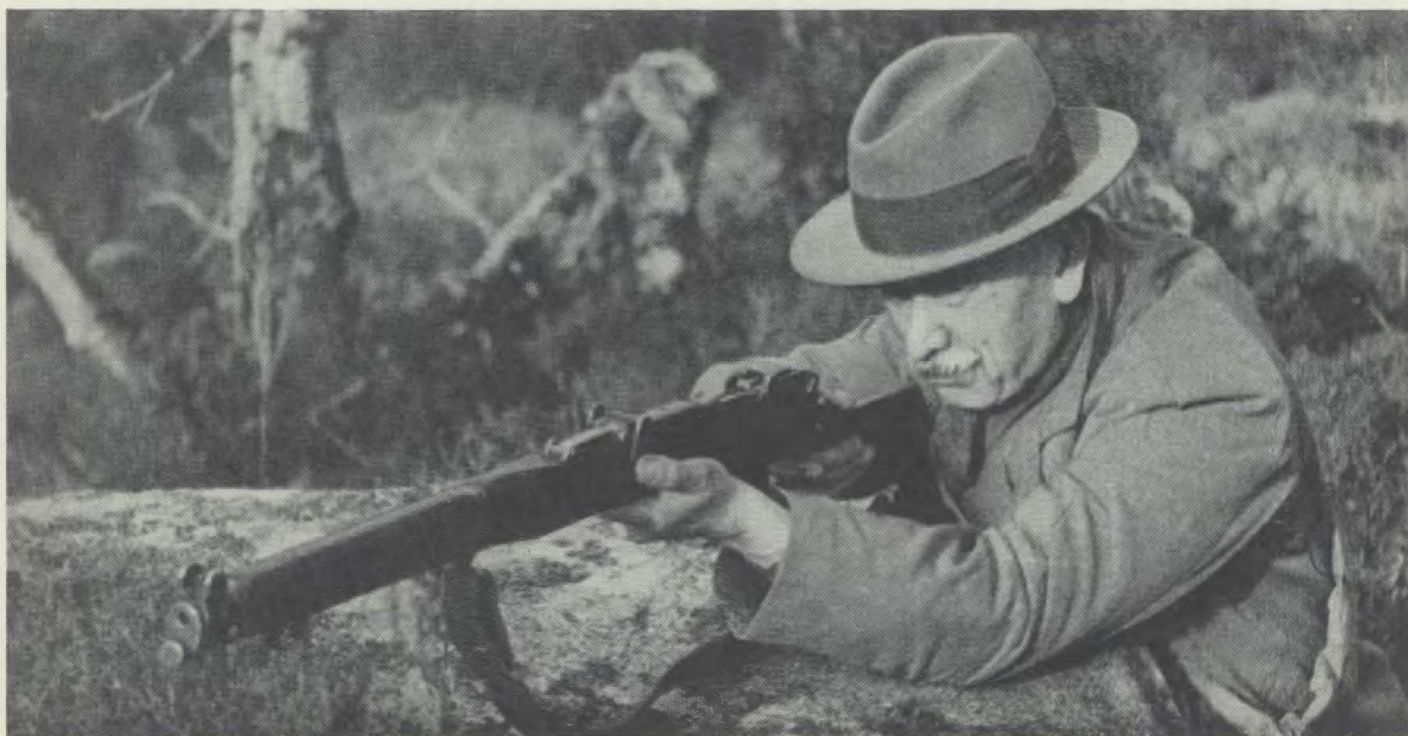
The great race movements influencing and influenced in their turn by the shift of vegetation, the empty cities of the deserts; the ruthless denudation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries resulting in widespread bog and marshland; the disasters of erosion and flood in many countries to-day, would surely make a dramatic prelude to the scientific study of forestry and the efforts being made to bring its full importance before the public.

Besides this type of production there are countless ways in which the camera can demonstrate methods far more effectively than lecturer or textbook. Drainage, for example, a dull enough subject on the face of it, of immense importance to a country to a great extent dependent on its agricultural output.

From the viewpoint of director, cameraman and scenarist this is a country of magnificent films. Here, too, are great oral traditions rich in imagery, which the cinema can preserve and invest with a new meaning in relation to the whole. The revival of Gaelic is a matter of fierce controversy; surely the language is more likely to take care of itself if more of this energy were to go to the constructive work of bringing new interests to those who turn restlessly towards the cities!

Take the Folk Lore Commission. In my stride across the present I see a fine film to be made of this great work of collecting, annotating and analysing the history alive in the minds of the older generation like a smouldering turf sod, as it has been passed down through the centuries. Unfortunately much of this work has to be done by a system of dictaphone recording and we are losing for ever the fine faces, the voices and intonation of many of the best speakers in both tongues.

Without the film as a notebook and a trumpet, to record and proclaim, much of our enduring character will not survive or, at the most, must pass lifelessly into print.



The Dawn

An Irish film produced by Michael Gluson

SEARCHLIGHT ON VETERANS

It is unusual for an author to review his own work, but we asked ARTHUR VESSELO to write this article because we think the catalogue he has compiled is unique and deserves a gloss

UNDER THE PATERNAL auspices of the British Film Institute, I have recently completed a selected and annotated catalogue of those early films of all countries (from the origins up to and including 1934) which are still available for hire in Great Britain. The reasons which made such a catalogue desirable, and the problems arising in its compilation, seemed to me to be of sufficient general interest to deserve elucidation in these pages.

OBSCURITY OF EARLY FILM-HISTORY

In making the compilation, my main wish was to put the beginnings of order into an obscure and unsatisfactory state of affairs. Although the cinema, as we know it, has only been in existence for a period of some forty-odd years, its origins have already, through lack of foresight, become largely mythical. Records, where there are any, are confused and scrappy: not only are the sources of information at too many points either self-contradictory or completely lacking, but the films themselves which are the only ultimate basis of criticism and assessment have in an inordinate number of cases simply disappeared.

IMPORTANCE OF A FIRST-HAND STUDY OF FILM-HISTORY

This last is a serious matter, since a study of early films is essential to the understanding of the films of to-day. Few would pretend that a true knowledge of literary evolution could be based on second-hand information, without reference to original texts; and if this is so with literature, it is infinitely more so with films, where description is bound to be tortuous and quotation impossible. Moreover, the handful of pioneer books on film-history have usually been written from exaggeratedly subjective viewpoints, and the film's rapid progress in technique and otherwise tends to make most of their opinions antiquated. In the circumstances, there is little point in telling people that such-and-such classes of old films are important, or that they ought to have seen them, unless one is prepared to discover if any of them are still actually available for seeing, and if so where. It will thereupon become the business of the specialist film groups to show them, not in programmes of assorted oddments but in contexts so arranged as to bring out the significant points.

What about the repertory movement? someone will say. Certainly this movement serves a purpose, and of late it has been strengthened by the establishment of a strong centrally-owned chain of popular repertory cinemas in this country, and by the specific reissue of old films by many of the big companies in order to fill up programmes which have been thinned by an economic pause in production activity. In both these latter spheres, however, the majority of the reissues do not go back a long way in date, and are limited by the randomness of immediate box-office requirements; and too often, when the reissues occur in ordinary programmes, they are not even specified as being old films.

OLD FILMS AND THE FILM SOCIETY MOVEMENT

For the moment, at any rate, it is therefore best to think in terms of the work that can be done by the specialist "appreciation"-groups, which centre at present in the local film societies. The film society as a rule fulfils another function before that of reviving old films of value—that is, the function of exhibiting current continental and documentary matter not otherwise easily to be seen ("current" is here an elastic term, covering a period of three or four years). The relative importance of these two functions to a particular society depends to a great extent on whether or not it operates in a town which, like London, already has its own news and continental cinemas for the public showing of specialised current material; but in any case—if only because of the difficulty of obtaining a sufficiently continuous supply of up-to-date films—the two functions must always in a measure exist side by side.

Unfortunately these functions are in practice commonly confused. The result is that at society performances old films are quite often thrown indiscriminately into mixed programmes, where they may be treated in either of two extreme ways. Either they are held up as "classic" examples of screen art, surpassing films of the same sort produced at a much later date, or they are gayed and held up to ridicule (often, when silent, they are deliberately run through the projector too fast in order to produce a ludicrous effect).

Both methods act chiefly in the way of falsification. As to the first, the film's exceptionally rapid technical development, still far from complete, and the accompanying adaptation of the public mind to increasingly more advanced and more compact forms of statement, cause even the best of old films to date noticeably: there are probably very few films indeed before, say, 1932, whose main value at the present day is other than historical. Description in terms of "classics", therefore, will lead either to boredom in an audience or to a wholly artificial approval.

On the other hand, to treat early films merely as subjects for laughter is equivalent to poking fun at Stephenson's Rocket because it lacks the streamlined perfection of the Silver Jubilee. This attitude of mind, being based on a lack of historical perspective and not on understanding, cannot even produce continued satisfaction on its own, for the attempted extraction of unconscious humour quickly becomes wearisome.

GENERAL POSITION OF FILM SOCIETIES

A few words on the general position of film societies may here be in place. Since current English-speaking feature films are monopolised by the ordinary public cinemas, these classes of films are necessarily excluded from society performances, with the result that a sharp and for the most part unreal distinction arises. Normal performances as such are labelled "popular"; society performances as such, being much rarer (and in this respect



Henry, King of Navarre

Vintage 1924

Stoll

the specialist cinemas fall into the same category), are considered "cultural", and their content, even though in certain ways limited by purely external conditions, is felt to be on a higher plane than what is seen elsewhere.

Presumably the contrast between higher and lower does exist—but undoubtedly not in this conveniently simplified form. Moreover, the position leads to the anomaly that English-speaking features, while apparently "popular" so long as they are new, are permitted to enter the "cultural" class as soon as they are old enough to be incorporated into society performances without exaggerated difficulty or expense.

It is futile to allot blame, and the film society system would not be so flourishing as it is if its virtues were not plainly greater than its inevitable defects. But it does no harm to emphasise the fact that a film society's duty is to widen appreciation, not to create exclusive cults; and if the misleading distinction between types of current films can be in large part attributed to long-established trade-barriers, about which, for a variety of reasons, nothing much can be done, yet, in the revival-sphere, proper organisation and the orderly presentation of material could do wonders.

In attempting to organise the revival-field, obviously the first necessity is to find out what early films are ready to hand, and to list them suitably for reference. That is what I have tried to do in my catalogue: it is a pity that nobody has ever thought of doing it before. Later, in a companion-pamphlet, I hope that I may be able to make some suggestions for series of linked-up programmes based on the films available. Meanwhile, I should like to discuss some illuminating points which cropped up in the course of my investigations.

RELATIVE QUANTITIES OF FILMS AVAILABLE

First, with regard to the comparative numbers of films available from different countries. As might be expected, the American list is much the largest—it covers nearly 18 pages. The British covers $8\frac{1}{2}$, the French nearly 3, the German 3, the Russian $\frac{1}{2}$, and all the rest put together $1\frac{1}{2}$. It is plain that these extravagant quantitative differences only roughly correspond to actual quantitative differences in production: that applies also to the qualitative differences of films listed. Even if we discount the casual degree of differentiation due merely to randomness of survival (and that means a great deal) we have still to recognise how much is due to the monopolisation of the British markets—part normal, part economic and artificial—by particular sources. And where the supply is small to begin with, the importance of each subsequent loss is considerably magnified.

The entirely local nature of the compilation deserves emphasis. Had it, for example, been put together in America, then the American section would undoubtedly be considerably larger even than it is now, while the British one would probably be reduced to the skimpy dimensions of the French or German, or less. Had the catalogue been compiled in, say, France, which is a major Continental producing country, then it is likely that the quantity of Continental films of all countries would be proportionately larger, the American absolutely somewhat smaller (perhaps not to an outstanding degree), and the proportion of British to French films completely reversed. That is to say, the arbitrary circumstance that the catalogue was made out in this country directly affects its form.

Not every single film which is still available is included. Since, however, the omissions consist almost entirely of very minor British and American films, the eliminating

process has served to make the balance more, not less, equitable.

Continental films have never achieved more than a limited foothold in Great Britain, and that is, of course, one, though not the only, reason why it is quite unsound to assume that any accurate relationship exists between the proportionate numbers of films available and those actually produced in the several countries. On the same basis, the miniature groups of Continental films listed may be taken in general to represent not the whole scale of production in each country (as the British and American groups do) but only the higher ranges.

FRAGMENTARY NATURE OF SURVIVALS

Even, however, if we think simply in terms of the films shown in this country, the collection available is still hopelessly incomplete and its origins erratic. The huge gaps in the early years show this clearly. Of the first two decades or so of the cinema's existence, very little indeed remains beyond the miraculously-preserved Chaplin films (their preservation is the best possible tribute to their value) and a few scattered but extremely interesting one- and two-reelers which the National Film Library has managed to unearth and reprint. Those who regard the efforts of these formative years as unimportant, and their obliteration not worth bothering about, take a view with which I cannot agree. For all their crudity and fragmentariness the first films contain in embryo nearly every later development, and as we trace the slow course of their advance to something resembling an individual narrative technique we are able to throw an astonishing amount of light on much more recent problems. And it is worth remembering that out of the history of a medium which altogether covers hardly more than forty years, twenty years and over is a regrettably large bite.

CAUSES OF DISAPPEARANCE OF EARLY FILMS

The wholesale disappearance of films is largely due to the attitude which the trade has always held towards its own product. Films have been treated primarily as merchandise, and as soon as their novelty-value (the value on which they have chiefly depended for monetary returns) has worn off, they have been discarded and forgotten. In the early days, before an organised industry had yet grown up, when original negatives were freely bought and sold, and when storage room must have been very small, this attitude meant that the preservation of even a negative for more than a short period was a rarity; that, even if it were accidentally preserved, after a little while no one probably would know where it was; and that the bare fact of its existence in the first place would only be recorded if a trade journal had taken the trouble to review it.

Later on, with the expansion and greater stabilisation of the industry, things improved somewhat. Whenever a company was dissolved, material was invariably lost, but otherwise the indiscriminate junking of old negatives became less common. To-day, however, the position is still a long way from being satisfactory from the historian's point of view. In the case of foreign films, prints may after a time have to be returned to their makers; and the corresponding negatives, if they are obtainable anywhere, will be so only in the countries of origin. But, in addition, it is still a habit of many of the bigger firms over here to destroy all prints as soon as their novelty-value goes.

A negative without a print is of, course, no use unless someone is willing to pay for new prints to be made from it, and a distributing company will itself bear the expense of reprinting only if it decides that there is a wide demand for reissue. To the single-performance body, such as a film society, a mere negative therefore means nothing. It might be thought that an attempt would at any rate be made to save copies of certain selected films which have been successful, but too often even this depends on the existence of some small company which is ready to buy up old stock for redistribution. Furthermore, there is no real guarantee that stock bought up in this way will always be what is best fitted for preservation. This becomes more and more obvious as we go back. In the silent period, which is chiefly represented by sub-standard reductions, the haphazardness of selection is at times very plain indeed.

Lack of storage room is no doubt responsible for a good deal: and another obstacle is that of short-term story rights. Hitchcock's *Blackmail*, for instance, is not available now in its original form because the company for which it was made had purchased the story rights only for a short length of time, and these rights have now expired. This applies in other cases too.

ACTUAL AND IDEAL CONDITIONS OF REFERENCE

Unhappily, even where early material does exist, distributing-firms are not always able to say immediately just what they have or where it is. Not all firms, naturally, are in the same boat; but it is extraordinary how often inquiries will be met by long and repeated delays, scrappy answers, and probably extreme astonishment (sometimes coupled with suspicion) at the idea of anybody showing the dimmest interest in any film more than five years old.

In ideal circumstances there would be a single encyclopædic volume of reference, revised annually, which would contain the names and the relevant details of all films ever exhibited in this country, and, attached to this, a list of those actually available for hire at the date of publication. In view of the straggling and un-coordinated growth of the film industry in the past, the absence of such a tome is understandable, and the thought of its possible compilation perhaps only a wild dream of perfection. But it would at least help if the separate distributing companies could be induced to publish, at regular intervals, a systematic catalogue of their own material, arranged on a similar principle.

It was, of course, the necessity for co-ordination of one kind and another which was largely responsible for the establishment of the British Film Institute in 1933, together with its later-added subsidiary body, the National Film Library. Since 1935, when the Library was established, it has wisely concentrated upon its salvaging work of preservation, and has collected some two million feet of films, much of it of unique interest. Several of these films have been copied for its Loan Section, and more will be made available as funds permit. Others are being acquired from similar archives abroad through the International Federation of Film Archives. The Institute has been collecting written records from the beginning. All this is to the good. The evils of malorganisation before 1933, however, are difficult to remedy in retrospect. In this context, the catalogue which I have made out may be taken as a first step, inadequate though it inevitably is in itself, towards a thorough documentation of the past in the manner indicated.



Battleship Potemkin

"God-like Fury"

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ANGRY

"We are living in an age of wrath Let, then, the cinema interpret the anger and restlessness of that society which gave it birth," says ETTA POLLANO

IT IS COMMON AND aged knowledge that the particular individual or medium of expression which has within himself or itself the greatest potentialities of powerful growth and development is strangely and perversely in fear of that power, like a bewildered parent in the presence of a remarkable child. Quite frequently it happens that the possessor of such power spends his time and vitality in a perpetual state of awe, too fearful to grasp its possibilities, too lethargic to recognise its unlimited and amazing strength, committing the all-too-human crime of allowing himself to be utterly lost in the absence of precedent.

Such has been the fate of the most powerful weapon of our time, the motion-picture. Its obvious and astounding virility has been, for the most part, allowed to stagnate and to smoulder in the most pitiful state of repression that has been the lot of any medium of expression. Possibly, this may be due to the fact that the motion-picture industry has been, and is, for economic reasons, in the hands of the wrong people. Perhaps there exist about us and unknown to us, potentially great artists who, if given the opportunity, could accomplish for the film that which the midwife does for the new-born infant when it shows itself reluctant to cry out lustily.

The film, as a medium of expression, has, within itself, a powerful and yet an undeveloped and retarded voice. Shall we say that the fault of this arrested development lies with the director, the aforementioned individual who is fearful and in awe of his own powers. I think that it is nearer the core of the matter to say that the dictates of the modern commercial world, governed by the heads and

financial controllers of the industry, completely stifle and submerge the efforts of the director. The inevitable result of this is that the individual is forced to betray his true function as an artist, his responsibility to society and to his contemporaries.

The function of true art is to be useful to the community at large, to provide creative interpretation for the greatest number of people. True, the motion-picture industry will, no doubt, retort that this is precisely what it has been doing—providing entertainment for all. But there is a vast difference between mere entertainment, such as the usual fictional film of the boy-meets-girl variety and honest interpretation of deep-seated realities. Perhaps it is too much to expect, at this stage, that the exploiters of the industry have any intention of making a more potent and specific use of the resources of their medium while there remains profit to be made by catering to the uninformed and uncritical side of the human mind. As long as the escapist formula and evasion of reality prove to be money-makers, there is little optimism to encourage the belief that the film will take its place definitely as a useful art form.

All great artists have created their most important work by submerging their sensibilities in the movement of contemporary life. If the cinema pretends to be an art in itself it must fall in line with the other and older arts, and draw its nourishment and inspiration from the problems of the common man. There is so much in the world of to-day that should arouse the anger and the critical faculties of the man behind the camera. He is as much a part of the structure in which he finds himself as is the man who makes his shoes,

the baker who supplies his bread, the physician who cares for his health; he must, therefore, serve as definite purpose in that structure. He cannot turn his eyes away and escape into the too-common luxury of wish-fulfilment creativeness. In order to endure, in fact, to exist at all, as an artist he must place his finger on the pulse of his fellow-man, and thereby serve as the interpreter, the mirror by which his contemporaries are reflected, the channel through which flows the force of popular articulation.

We are living in an age of wrath. The film, like any other medium of artistic expression, was born of the necessities and activities of society. Let, then, the cinema interpret the anger and the restlessness of that society which gave it birth; let it dramatise, with all of its inherent forces of eloquence, the living scene in which it finds itself. Since honest and creative thinking is completely dependent upon the grasp of the realities of its time, the artist to-day must be as angry as the age in which he lives; for, under these circumstances, a creative effort can never become a truly great work of art unless the creator of such is properly incensed. To be merely lukewarm in one's anger is miserably insufficient. Indeed, in such a case the word "anger" is not justified; for to be wrathful with something is in itself synonymous with the highest form of intensity of being.

Before the artist can be born, the man must, of necessity, find dissatisfaction with "things as they are." The next step is not, as is commonly and fallaciously supposed, to set about and make "things as he would like them to be," but rather as he *wants* them to be. There is a very fine and definite distinction between the passive "like" and the active "want." And in that distinction lies the secret of why a certain attempt at expression of anger, of disapproval, in any medium of artistic endeavour, becomes a work of art, while another can hardly be heard for its small, shrill voice of pseudo-wrath. In the case of our youngest and most precocious child of artistic expression, it has been evidenced all too clearly that it is not enough merely to have something to say; one must be "mad as a hornet's nest," when saying it.

The function that the film performs in the present social structure must be kept constantly in mind. A film must have some relation to the needs of the world of to-day; a film with a sense of direction. The important films and, lamentably, they are few, have never been made with the anticipation of remuneration, or for mere individual artistic expression, but rather with a special message in view. These films are important because of the intensity of purpose possessed by their creators; lacking this I cannot believe that the cinema is significant. Too often a splendid literary conception, potentially a great film, has been abused and shamefully betrayed because the director was lacking in sufficient capacity for intensity. Perhaps he is fearful of exaggeration. Well, then, he is not intelligent; because true intelligence is in some way akin to the talent for exaggeration. The belief that to exaggerate is evidence of dishonesty and warped vision is exceedingly fallacious; rather is it nearer the truth to contend that exaggeration is the ability to see more clearly and distinctly than the average dulled eye can see. The director who is not afraid to stretch and manipulate, to hold up life on a greater scale than by which it is casually measured and estimated every day, becomes articulate to the degree where everyone who becomes his audience is able to grasp that which he is attempting to say through his medium.

It is ironic to note that the great films of anger have,

for the most part, been made in days when the world, comparatively speaking, was much calmer and well-balanced than it is to-day. Of course, "the poor are always with us." But to-day the world is a great deal more poverty-stricken, both mentally and spiritually, as well as materially, than the era in which D. W. Griffith made *Intolerance*. On the Continent, Pabst performed the mission of awakening social consciousness with such films as *Kameradschaft Westfront* 1918, and *Dreigroschenoper*. The Russian school has given us the most angry films by far. If Sergei Eisenstein had never made but the one film, *October*, he could, without any competition, lay claim to the distinction of being the most sincerely angry man of the cinema. There his anger was, as it always has been, with the oppression of human beings. With *Potemkin*, an earlier film, he gained the immediate attention of the world as the master of his craft when he borrowed all the elements from the Creator, and with his camera lashed about with God-like fury. Never before, or since, in the history of the cinema, has there been such divine wrath as that of Eisenstein. Pudovkin and Dovjenko, the former with *Mother* and *The End of St. Petersburg*, the latter with *Arsenal*, were sufficiently incensed with worldly things to merit comparison with their contemporary. In the American school Fritz Lang, who made *Fury*, and Lewis Milestone (*All Quiet On The Western Front*) showed themselves to be influenced by the Russians who, in turn, had been, to a great extent, the pupils of Griffith. But these are the films of the past.

To-day the real issues of modern society are being almost entirely neglected. In this era of social awakening, and it isn't that we have reached this stage of human progress because of a superior culture, but rather because of so many simultaneous crises in present-day history, it is imperative that the ultimate aim of the cinema should be to present man's struggle in society. Surely it is futile to create characters and situations which exist entirely in a hypocritical world of make-believe, and which have no affinity with the realities of the modern world. It is pitifully obvious that the film-makers have failed to relate their creations to contemporary social awareness. It is apparent, too, that they have lost touch with the realities of life and are not as close as they should be to the earth. Life is the only answer to Art, and, if they were more preoccupied with it, it would not be necessary for them to crawl into the drought and the hollowness of escapism, and to recoil from human activity because of squeamishness. There is a great deal of truth and beauty in those things which people regard as too wretched for intense attention. Having wallowed for so long in the rut of make-believe the film-makers sit back and stupidly wonder why their work is sterile. Humanity is no common, frivolous subject who comes to sit for her portrait before the camera, and is then content to call her likeness that which results upon the developed film. Rather is she a subtle and sensitive creature whose image can be painted only by a truly great artist.

The motion-picture is the most articulate mode of expression of our times. It is gifted with a vital and radiant tongue. It is our contemporary Demosthenes, with all of his eloquence and persuasiveness. It should, therefore, be the credo of the film-makers that their medium could play an exceedingly important part in the task of interpreting society. In our time the film, more than any other form of expression, has the dramatic power to stimulate, to educate, and to conquer the imagination of the people. There is so much to say! Is there no one articulate?

BIG SCREEN TELEVISION

RICHARD FORD wrote this article in the piping times of peace. One day the problems he deals with, and which now seem so far away, will resume their urgency. Meanwhile his point of view may interest our American readers

MR. LEN LYE'S stimulating article in your Summer issue on the need for a new technique in television has prompted me to set down a few thoughts on another aspect of the problem—that of television on a big screen.

My qualifications are not scientific, and I cannot discourse on the technical problems that confront the engineers who are constructing apparatus for receiving television transmissions and projecting them on to large screens in cinemas. The sponsors of all the systems—Baird, Scophony, or E.M.I.—will probably agree that one of their major difficulties is to get more light into the big screen picture. Another technical obstacle is the fact that back projection (projection from behind the cinema screen, is most unsatisfactory, and projection from the operating box is not yet feasible in a large cinema.

These are technical problems which will doubtless be overcome in the normal course of scientific progress in the evolution of new and complicated apparatus. At the same time, I have no desire to state a preference for quality of reproduction achieved by any one system. It is, in any event, too early in development to be certain which system will eventually prove most suitable for big screen reception.

Many people, including Mr. Lye himself in an article in *Life and Letters To-day*, have suggested that the public's desire for television in cinemas will be greatly stimulated when they realise that television can put before their eyes events that are happening at precisely the same moment as they are seen on the screen. But is this so? I realise that a judgment based on a few demonstrations in West End cinemas may not be valid, but for the present this experience must suffice. These few events have attracted audiences partly because the events themselves attracted a certain class of the public, and partly because big screen television is a novelty and there is a desire to see what it is like. On one or two of these occasions the cinemas have charged higher prices (only for boxing fights, I think).

Far more interesting than the events themselves have been the reactions of audiences in the cinemas. Whether these reactions, tempered, as they were, with the novelty of the occasion, are reliable guides for the future is uncertain. But a few facts stand out and are worth recording. First, big screen television takes place in a cinema, and the cinema is a building in which the audience expects to see films. In place of the film on the screen appears television on the screen. The screen for the one is similar to the screen for the other: it occupies the same position in relation to the angle of vision from each seat. The television entertainment is projected as an ingredient of the film entertainment from a purely visual point of view. There is nothing to distinguish the television picture basically from the film. It is in black and white; it occupies a rectangular space on the screen; the auditorium is in darkness. The only difference, at present, is that the television picture appears inferior to the film because of inadequate lighting and other technical flaws. There is even a commentary which is not unlike the newsreel commentary.

In fact I doubt very much whether the audience appreciates the simultaneous quality peculiar to television once the transmission has started and their interest is absorbed in the action of the event on the screen. It is indeed astonishing that the scientific marvel of television on a big screen counts for so little. But it does appear to be so. This means that the argument that television will appeal to cinemagoers because of its "now" quality loses some of its force, and television in cinemas will have to rely far more on the quality of what it offers, in direct competition with the existing newsreels.

There will always be occasion of special interest when television can bring immediate news on to the screen in a way that the newsreels cannot do. But these occasions are rare, and even with all the ingenuity of heavy advance publicity they could scarcely be more frequent than once a week on the average. But the cinemagoer demands a newsreel as an essential part of his entertainment and the newsreel satisfies his desire for what Mr. Lye has called "participation in life." This term is, I think, misconceived. There is an assumption among an intellectual minority that the public have an urge to "participate in life" when visiting the cinema, and the commercial success of a few documentary films is often quoted in support of this assumption. But there is no psychological evidence to support this view; indeed, as the strain of living in towns increases and as national "crises" of one sort or another become more frequent, the cinema becomes more and more an escape where for ninepence, or more or less, Mr. Citizen can spend two or three hours relaxing inside a dream world which provides him with the emotional stimulation that is most appropriate for his physical and mental condition. To this end the newsreels co-operate. They provide a kind of news that is far removed from being a "participation in life." The essential ingredients of the newsreels—sports; military and naval scenes, aeroplane flights, Royalty episodes, and so on—are designed to provide what the public wants as part of its film entertainment. Although the events shown may have taken place 3 days or 6 days or even weeks previously, their pictorial value has not diminished. There may not be much "mass participation" by the audience in the events—newsreel items are probably regarded as illustrations of news facts already absorbed through the newspapers or radio—but I doubt whether the average audience of an average cinema has any desire to "mass participate" in current events after a hard day's work.

Further, there is a limitation of time which operates against televised news. About 80 per cent of all cinemagoers attend in the evenings, either between 6 p.m. and 8.30 p.m. or between 8.30 p.m. and 11 p.m. How much real "news" occurs in the evenings, quite apart from the technical difficulties of darkness.

The thrill of the newsreel is actually based on a preconceived knowledge of what is likely to appear in it. Televised newsreel can only announce in advance the items it intends to cover. A recent example comes to mind. Last

May I was concerned with the opening of a very large new cinema in Blackpool. The date coincided with the departure of the King and Queen for Canada. If I remember aright the Empress of Australia left Southampton in the early evening. At about 11 p.m. the same evening a full newsreel of the departure arrived by air and was exhibited in that cinema at Blackpool. The effect on the audience of the technical achievement alone, apart from the event, was enormous. Would a televised view of the event have produced an equal effect? The advantage of the newsreel is in its editing. Real events happen slowly, with sudden bursts of pictorial activity. The newsreel deletes all the *longueurs*, the delays, the unimportant spaces of time. They present the cream, and dish it up in the most palatable form. The inferiority of televised news in this respect was shown all too clearly in the return of the King and Queen after their Canadian tour. This was not the fault of technical staff, but in the basic mistake of presenting a continuous (and therefore tiring) pictorial record of what happened in front of the cameras during a given space of time. Television news will have to be presented in an edited form if it is to succeed. This editing, however, may detract from the "now" quality which is rightly considered its greatest asset.

Before even a preliminary stage can be reached, there is an enormous advance that must be made. The difficulties are technical—already discussed; financial, and administrative. The financial difficulties appear formidable, but it is probable that they will be overcome in the same way as the problem of installing sound apparatus in the silent cinemas in 1929. At present the cost of a single big screen projection apparatus for a large cinema averages nearly £2,000. Whatever the ultimate price may be, there are only 4,500 cinemas, of which a fair proportion will be outside television reception areas for a considerable time. Moreover, the cinema audience will certainly not accept increased prices to pay for television installations, especially as televised news can only occupy about 10 per cent of the programme time.

More important at present is the administrative difficulty. From the first signs of television as part of cinema entertainment the exhibitors (i.e. the owners of cinemas) and the renters (i.e. the distributors of films) have been decidedly antipathetic and sometimes openly hostile. What are their main fears? First, that television in the home will have a bad effect on cinema attendances. Secondly, that the existing chaos over rediffusion rights suggests that heavy fees may be demanded from the cinemas for the right to rediffuse popular events. It is worth examining the extent to which these fears are justified. Television in the home will in the distant future be accepted as part of the normal household radio, and just as in radio there are occasional broadcast events that keep the public at home and empty the cinemas, so is this likely to happen with television. But there is no ground for supposing that home television will have a continuously serious effect on cinema attendance. Mass psychologists will confirm that the 18 millions or more who go to the cinema every week are not really attracted by the films, except in so far as their choice of cinema is affected, but by the desire to sit in the dark among a mass of people and to enjoy a variety of emotional experiences and stimulations that they find satisfying. Television in the home can never supplant this essential function of the cinema, and in my opinion, the fears of the exhibitors on this score are unfounded. Yet this fear has led Metro-Goldwyn Mayer—

TO OUR READERS

It will very greatly assist the distribution of SIGHT & SOUND if readers who are not direct postal subscribers or members of the British Film Institute will place a regular order for the magazine with their newsagent. Indeed, this will be the only way to ensure obtaining a copy as war conditions have compelled us, in common with all other periodicals, to restrict "casual" sales as far as possible

the most respected if not the largest and richest film organisation—to prohibit absolutely the use of either their films or their stars on television. For this there may also be another reason—the fear that television will upset the market value of stars, as has happened with sponsored radio in America.

The second fear—the cost of buying rediffusion rights—has already proved itself true. The negotiations for the diffusion of big fights, the Derby and other events have left a very bitter taste behind them. From the exhibitor's point of view the primary difficulty is the refusal of the B.B.C. to be concerned in the negotiations between cinemas and promoters. The exhibitors would much prefer to deal with the B.B.C. and to pay them a fixed fee based on seating capacity and potential earnings. This has been refused by the B.B.C. who have left the cinemas to fight the promoters of sporting events—the latter maintaining that they must receive very full compensation for the customers who prefer to see the event in a cinema and not, for instance, in a stadium. The position has been made worse by the lack of co-ordination among the exhibitors, and, on at least one occasion, the main circuits have been involved in bidding against each other, to the advantage of the promoter of the event. Unfortunately the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association represents the interests of the independent cinemas far more than those of the circuits, who are inclined to act unfettered by the Association. No doubt the B.B.C. would say "Why don't you exhibitors organise yourselves properly?" But there is so much ill feeling between the independents and the circuits that a united policy is not likely at present. Further, the circuits are in a far better financial position to make arrangements with one of the television companies for big screen installations than the owner of one or two cinemas.

This touches on the most essential need for immediate development—better liaison between the exhibitors and renters and the television executives. Eventually there must be a standing Joint Committee of film and television executives to deal with the varied problems that will certainly arise as big screen installations grow in number.

ARTISTIC ALLIANCE

*Fantasy, perhaps, but it was thought
of nearly 30 years ago according to*
NORMAN PAUL

FOR A VERY LONG time now the cinema and theatre have been at one another's throat. It seems the drama of the legitimate stage and that of the silver screen are unable to see eye to eye, and are continually haggling over grievances, either real or fancied.

It is only necessary to take a walk round London to realise the overwhelming majority the cinemas have over the theatres. The Empire, the Carlton, the Dominion, the London Pavilion, all these houses were built primarily as theatres. Now they are cinemas. These names are only a few picked at random, yet they serve to illustrate the growing tendency. Does this mean the screen is more popular than the stage, or does it mean it is more practical?

Chiefly, it is more practical. Nowadays people like to see more ambitious productions than did their grandparents, productions that are literally impossible to do on the stage. This is where the cinema scores heavily over her rival. Almost anything can be portrayed on the screen, whereas action on the stage is very limited.

Naturally, the flesh-and-blood stage is a little embittered over it all. She feels this new medium of entertainment—for so it is, compared with the history of the theatre—is trying to oust her out of existence.

Nothing of the sort. It is simply a question of the survival of the fittest, and the sooner the theatre realises this and rouses herself from her lethargic state of primitiveness the less willing she will find her stars to leave the footlights for the arc lamps.

How grand it would be to try and unite these two great media of entertainment in one common cause of conviviality. Why should it not be possible to present a production with part of the action on the stage and part on the screen? This would be a fine beginning to the reunion of the sisters, for sisters they undoubtedly are. To what marvellous heights the action of the story could rise. Scenes that are impossible on the stage would be produced on the screen, while the simpler aspects of the action, more suited to the stage, would be played by the same actors in the flesh. The two arts would be united, and with the help of the cinema the theatre would come into her own again.

To begin with it may seem too much of a contrast. The abrupt change from the normal-sized figures on the stage to the giant-like shadows of the screen may render the whole thing artificial. The normal-speaking voice would become "canned" and unnatural.

This, however, shouldn't present any serious difficulty. An audience would soon acclimatise itself to the change and, indeed, would welcome it. Variety is the spice of life! If possible our film should be in technicolour in order to harmonise with the stage portion of the play. But this is not absolutely essential, and would depend greatly on the backers' pockets. Colour films are very expensive!

As far as possible the film sequence should keep to action, leaving dialogue to the flesh and blood actors. Incidentally, this would be greatly beneficial to the modern film. Nowadays there are far too many films that are too "talkie-talkie,"

and, as Joseph Calleia, the film actor, once said to me, there is not enough use of mime made in the present-day film story.

As a matter of fact the idea is not altogether new. Laurence Irving used it in 1910 in his production of *Margaret Catchpole* at the Prince of Wales Theatre, Birmingham. In the scene where Margaret was escaping from prison, a sheet was let down on to the stage. From the front row of the dress circle a bioscope projected a film showing the climb over the prison wall and the mad dash through the forest.

This was almost thirty years ago, and the film was somewhat crude. But Laurence Irving was always a keen experimenter and foresaw the enormous possibilities of a screen-cum-stage show and proved it by this early attempt. How much more effectual it would be now, in 1939, with all the modern improvements in the film, the fine photography, the natural movements, and the faultless sound. Why can't we carry on his great idea and show the theatre world something new in entertainment?

Our screen-cum-stage theatre would have to be classed first and foremost as a theatre and not as a cinema. There could be no duplication of the play, and, unlike the cinema, it could be performed only at one place at a time. Obviously performances would have to be limited to those houses that possess a stage. Most of the West End cinemas are lucky in this respect. The legitimate theatres would have to be modernised and have projection boxes built, although many already have this facility. There would be fewer intervals. The public would feel they were getting more for their money, while the actors themselves would find longer periods of rest in their dressing-rooms while the screen was carrying on the story. Perhaps it would mean slightly longer hours for the cast if the idea were to follow the cinema and become continuous. But the hours they would otherwise be spending in the film studio would be infinitely longer.

Naturally, there would be difficulties. If the understudy were to step into the star's shoes we should have two heroes! But the make-up man is so clever now that the audience would find it difficult to differentiate between the stage and the screen hero. Then there's the question of expense. A play can cost anything from £50 to £3,000 to put on. Everything considered a film can be produced for about £5 a foot. It should be easily possible by budgeting carefully to strike a happy medium and to keep expenses normal. It is difficult, however, to give any accurate figures, for the cost would greatly depend on the size of the production and on the names of the stars. What about the backers; would they suffer. Not if they were content with profits equal to the normal theatre. It would be folly to expect returns as earned by any super film. The theatre can never hope to rival the cinema in terms of cash. As stated above, our screen-cum-stage production definitely comes under the category of theatre.

When leaving the West End, would it be possible to go on tour? Of course it would! The company would have to step warily with regard to their choice of a theatre. But in these days with so many local houses alternating between stage and screen, and so many super cinemas presenting stage shows with their pictures, this shouldn't really present any difficulty.

It should prove an interesting experiment. The legitimate stage, with this blood transfusion of youth in her veins, should become really popular again, whilst the cinema would be contributing greatly to the maintenance of dramatic art.

THE DANES HAVE A WORD FOR IT

Statens Filmcentral they call their new Film Institute, which is already doing useful work. Here WINIFRED HOLMES outlines its main programme and policy

ON THE 13TH APRIL, 1938, an Act was passed by the Danish Government providing for a Film Fund "to promote the use of films for educational purposes and to encourage culture and art generally by means of films." To this end it established a Film Institute (Statens Filmcentral), whose chief objects are to produce and rent educational films and to purchase and rent films which are artistically and culturally valuable for public showing in Denmark.

The Film Fund is drawn from the surplus revenues of the Government Film Censorship Department and the tax on cinema profits. Annually the sum allotted is kr. 150,000 (roughly £7,500). Part of this sum may also be used to subsidise the "production of films of Danish propaganda, trade and industry."

Last November the Statens Filmcentral started operations and drew up a working plan. First it was concerned with establishing a film library from which schools and other educational bodies might rent films. Second it secured propaganda in the Press for circulating films and distributed printed matter about films; it arranged lectures, demonstrations and courses of instruction to teachers in how to make use of films in teaching and how to handle films and projectors.

Building up a library for school and club renting must necessarily be uphill work at first. The Institute has now 94 films suitable for teaching purposes, either made at home or bought from abroad. Of each there are as many copies as the demand requires. At present they are all 16 mm. silent films as this type is more suitable for school requirements, few schools being able to afford to buy 16 mm. sound equipment yet.

On the other hand sound film is being demanded by the adult educational clubs—an important feature of Danish life. For instance, the Workers' Educational Union—largest adult educational organisation in the country—is providing its branches everywhere with sound equipment. The Institute has undertaken to supply them with sound films or else to arrange shows in any of the numerous clubs of the Union to which it sends equipment, technical service and films. The charge for such shows is approximately £3 5s. each, and must be carried by the Clubs. Only members are admitted.

Renting of films can be done either by hiring single films, when the cost of transport for delivery is paid by the renter and the cost of return by the Institute, or by means of a subscription system. A school will subscribe on a yearly basis for so many reels and the films are exchanged every week.

Branch libraries will be formed by the Institute in due course according to increasing demand.

SCHOOLS AND PROJECTION

Schools must provide their own projection equipment and two municipalities of Copenhagen have already managed to equip themselves with silent 16 mm. projectors. Soon every school will be so equipped, not only in the capital, but in other large Danish towns such as Aarhus,

Aalborg and Odensee. When local funds do not permit of this, the schools in a certain neighbourhood will share equipment and the cost of renting films, holding their educational shows in turn.

For village districts which are not able to join in such an expense-sharing scheme the Institute has evolved a collaboration with the public reading libraries. In country areas a car delivers and collects books at all the schools within a certain library radius. The Institute now arranges that it shall also distribute projectors and films.

Interest and belief in films as invaluable aids to education have been roused by the active propaganda work of the Institute since its foundation, and before that by another semi-official body called Danish Culture Films—"Dansk Kulturfilm". Lectures and demonstrations were given tirelessly until now the demand for teaching films is larger than the supply.

A course of instruction in how to use films for education and how to handle them is provided for teachers who wish to make use of films. In fact, such a course is made a condition by the Institute for those who are put in charge of its films, otherwise much damage might be done to them by inexperienced or careless hands.

DANISH CULTURE FILMS

This body has existed since April 1938, partly by means of a Government subsidy paid also out of the surplus funds of the Censorship. Its object is to produce films, in contradistinction to the Institute, which is concerned with buying and renting them. These films must have an educational or cultural value.

As a forerunner to the Institute it was originally an association of institutions and organisations all over the country which desired to qualify for assistance from the educational authorities to secure educational and cultural films.

The chief objects of such a collaboration were to prevent redundancy—two or more films being made on the same subject; to reduce the cost; to increase and improve production, and to obtain lower prices by means of co-operative buying.

The heads of this body were chosen by the Ministry of Education, and it received the support of the Foreign Office and the Ministries of Trade and Justice as well. After the formation of the Film Institute Danish Culture Films retired from the renting and purchasing market and concentrated solely on making films itself. Its programme is "to produce educational and cultural films, including short films, with subjects from Danish scenery, poetry, history and other Danish spheres of culture, and also films aiming at general propaganda for Denmark and Danish industry and commerce." A renting library will be built up of these films. The originals belong to the Government, but copies are rented according to their cost of production plus a small licence fee to help to write off the cost. When it is paid off entirely this fee is dropped. Danish Culture Films can rent its films to anybody and is particularly anxious to place them abroad.

PRODUCTION

Danish Culture Films have no equipment for producing, but collaborate with film-producing companies according to the nature of the film in question, Nordisk Film, Palladium, Asa Film and Minerva Film. The first three are feature film companies and Minerva Film is the only solely documentary producing company in Denmark. "The institution may also enter into financial arrangements with a producing company concerning longer culture films destined for showing in cinemas. The first of this kind was an historical film commemorating the emancipation of the peasants and the great agricultural reform of 1788. The Government contributed to it by waiving the entertainment tax, which represents 40 per cent on the price of admission, so that the revenue from the tax helped production. This film, which cost 300,000 kr. (approximately £15,000) to make has already covered that cost. The profits accruing hereafter will go to Danish Culture Films to help towards similar objects."

Here are some of the films produced by Danish Culture Films for the home educational and cultural market. They are extremely varied and of good quality, and on the whole have a strong Danish flavour.

Features in the Life of the Stork

Danish owls

Bird life on shore meadows

The magpie

The seagull

The lapwing

The oyster-catcher

War on flies

War on rats

The mysterious life of the eel (Professor Johs. Schmidt's discovery of the breeding-places of the eel in the Sargasso Sea, and its migrations during growth)

A dairy

The meat supply of a large city

Brick-making

Cement manufacturing

Production of aluminium (in co-operation with Danish Aluminium Industrial Co.)

Producing Lime-saltpetre from atmospheric nitrogen (in collaboration with I. G. Farben and Norwegian Hydro)

Physical drill at school

The first movements of an infant

The health of the child—the future of mankind (in collaboration with the Hygienic Committee of the Danish Medical Society and the Danish Women's League. Subject: nutrition in the first two years of life)

People and books. A film showing the development of the Public Library

A day in South Jutland

Bathing and Life-saving, with the two-fold purpose of encouraging people to live the healthy life of the beach and to safeguard them from the dangers of bathing.

Life in a Lunatic Asylum. "The intention of this film is to show the public that lunatic asylums work like ordinary hospitals and to counteract the deep-rooted horror of asylums as a kind of prison for incurables".

When I was in Denmark recently I had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Thomas P. Hejle, director of the Film Institute and of Danish Culture Films. He is a distinguished educationist and has been concerned with the Danish Schools Theatre for some years.

He kindly projected for me the historical feature film,

The King Commands, an educational film, *The Mysterious Life of the Eel* and *The Health of the Child*. I found *The King Commands* an excellent essay in historical film-making—it is well conceived, directed and shot—and although it has a stage flavour (the chief actors are well-known stage players) it has distinct cinema values and ought to be successful as an entertainment film outside Denmark. The scenes of farming and peasant life and the Danish countryside convincing and charming, full of life and movement, and of genuine emotion. Just before France was torn by the Revolution the peasants of Denmark revolted against the exacting laws of villeinage by which they were forced to neglect their own farms and harvest to work on and gather in their feudal lord's. Fortunately for the country (there would otherwise have been a bloody revolution there, too) some of the nobles, particularly Count Reventlow, championed the peasants and finally obtained the king's signature to an emancipation decree.

The Mysterious Life of the Eel is interesting scientifically, but much of it is made up from shots taken by Professor Schmidt on his Sargasso Sea expedition, and the photography is poor in parts. The eel forms a staple part of Danish diet, and is an important component of *smorrebrod*, so this film is of particular interest in Denmark.

The Health of the Child—The Future of Mankind was planned and produced as the spearpoint of a national campaign to interest and educate the public in the natural feeding of infants and the proper nutrition of the child up to two years old. Infant mortality is higher in Denmark than in the neighbouring countries of Sweden and Norway, and the health authorities, assisted by the Hygiene Committee of the Medical Society and the Danish Women's League decided in 1937 to make this film and to show it in every town and country district backed up by a lecture on the subject by a doctor. The film is very good indeed for its purpose. Practical, simple to understand even for the busiest or least intellectual of women, it is well photographed and cut, and it succeeded triumphantly in its object.

ITALIAN EXPERIMENT

An account of the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia. The author, ALDO PHILIPSON, has found, like so many others, that the cinema industry is distrustful of theoretic training

IN 1935 THE Italian Government thought it advisable to help the cinema industry of their country by opening a state school of cinematography, where future actors, directors and producers could be trained to produce a higher order of films technically, aesthetically and nationally. The conditions of the Italian cinema were then far from good. Some directors like Mario Camerini, Alessandrini

and Blasetti had given the Italian public some pleasing films, but, on the whole, the production was on a very low level; trying to imitate American film stories and atmosphere, but hopelessly failing.

The "Centro Sperimentale" was to be the means through which the Italian film industry was to recover its lost prestige, since it is an acknowledged fact that immediately before the war Italian films were the best on the market, and that it was only during the war that America took over the European industry, handicapped by war-time difficulties and preoccupations.

ORGANISATION

The school was organised on the following lines: a wing of a big industrial school in the suburbs of Rome was chosen as its temporary premises. That included only two classrooms and a large hall in the basement to be used alternately as a cinema and as an improvised studio. There was a room for the montage, a photographer's work-room and carpenter's workshop.

The short films that were shot by the pupils were always developed and printed outside the school. The director of the new school, Signor Luigi Chiarini, a literary critic and journalist, became at the same time an employee of the then new Ministry for Propaganda, since the school was to be under the direct control of that Ministry.

The first year the Staff was composed of Signor Blasetti, who has directed *Il Palio*, *Vecchia Guardia*, 1860, etc., none of which, we think, have ever reached England, but which mark him as one of the best Italian Directors; Sig. Barbaro, a well-known film critic and author, Sig. Corrado Pavolini, literary critic and poet, M. Peter Sciaroff, theatrical director and an old pupil of Stanilawski, Sig. Ventimiglia as optical instructor, and Sig. Valente, as a teacher of scenography. The staff has undergone several changes, but it has maintained essentially its rather theoretical qualities.

The school aims at giving its pupils a good cultural background. Here is the present programme of studies:—

The normal course of studies lasts two years, but there is a third year for the most promising pupils if they wish to continue. The following specialisations are possible:—Acting, Sound-technique, Camera-technique, Set and Costume Designing and Make-up, and Producing.

Pupils from any of these branches may be admitted later on to a class of Directing, Scenario writing and Montage, if they show special capacities.

EQUIPMENT

At present the school has two "Prevost" moviolas, two "Cinemecanica" projectors, a "Microtecnica" sound apparatus and a "Debry" camera, and a complete set of studio lights.

Of course, the fact that there is only one hall built for showing the films and for studio use, has made it necessary to remove very rapidly and frequently fall the setting, but that has only meant more practice for the students of set-making. Anyhow, this difficulty will be very soon done away with when the school will move into its perfectly modern premises in "Cinecitta," the new Italian "city of the cinema," not far from Rome and aptly situated in the Roman campagna.

Tuition is free, only 100 lire admittance fee being

required. The pupils to be admitted each year cannot be more than 50, their minimum age being 16 for women and 18 for men; no maximum age has been established. Women are only admitted to the acting and the costume, upholstery and make-up classes. Candidates must present their papers to the school, and then after the previous elimination, based on the scrutiny of documents and general evaluation of their achievements, a special commission appointed by the Ministry of Propaganda examine the remaining ones. So far the School has been very popular in Italy. The Direction must refuse annually an enormous number of candidates, especially for the acting class.

Foreigners may be admitted to attend courses, but cannot take an active part in the practical training. All students, after a first trial of three months, may be awarded scholarships, with the exception of course of foreigners, and also of the students of the third special year.

TRADE ATTITUDE

As to the attitude of the Trade to the School, it has so far not been altogether sympathetic. The Trade seems to be extremely distrustful of anybody who wishes to enter the cinema after a previous theoretic training. Like all people who have learnt their work only through experience, they feel that not much good can come out of theory. It is easy to prove that they are wrong, but it is very difficult, indeed, to persuade them of their error. So far the Italian Ministry of Propaganda, though it wields tremendous power over all the Trade, which is very bountifully subsidised and rather rigorously controlled, has not imposed any of the pupils on the Trade. Gradually, we think, conditions will alter. Already an always increasing number of pupils is breaking through these barriers and gaining admittance into the studios.

As to the real training that the school can give, one must agree that it has already done some very laudable work, when one thinks of the very low standard of education of the vast majority of cinema people. Of course, the first good job the school does is the elimination of undesirable candidates, but this work, too, will be useless unless some day the only channel through which the Italian cinema will get its recruits will be the "Centro Sperimentale."

If one has a criticism to make about this institution it is not certainly concerned with its aims which are very noble and praiseworthy, but rather with the fact that theory is given excessive importance, since we think that the intellectual equipment of a candidate to a cinema school should be already such as to enable him to think only of that ultimate specifically technical knowledge which he can get nowhere else. Furthermore, one can't help feeling that the staff should have one outstanding film personality who could breath into it, as it were, some of his animating genius.

Nevertheless, institutions such as these will always be useful, not only because they technically prepare the new cinema workers, but, above all we think, because they become a centre of cinema thought. Here the young personalities are shaped not so much by the teaching they listen to as by the exchange of ideas which the teaching and the atmosphere originates. Here probably is sown the seed that will give fruit in some years' time, when no one will realise that a new Italian Cinema was due to a very large extent to the "Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia."

Geography
Education

FILMS AS RELATED TO SCHOOL GEOGRAPHY

An interesting and practical article by C. BRAWN, a master at a L.C.C. Boys' School

BROADLY SPEAKING, State- and rate-aided schools are of two types—primary and secondary.

The primary include the infants (3 years to 7), the juniors (7 to 11), and the seniors (11 to 14) who have failed to pass an examination qualifying them to enter secondary schools. The secondary establishments include the selective central schools and the grammar schools of old and new foundation.

Both types of school have the same ultimate object in view. It is to fit their pupils for life and to take their respective places in the world as comfortably as may be.

But because of the widely different quality of intellectual material in the two types of school the methods of approach to that object must also be widely different.

In the primary school the syllabus is planned and the efforts of the teaching staff are directed to satisfying the natural inquisitiveness of the pupils, and to preparing them for the shock of meeting (at a tender age) a materialistic world, by broadening in advance their outlook on that world. In short, they are, as far as possible, brought face to face with the realities of life and taught the art of living.

In the secondary schools, however, where the leaving age is normally not less than sixteen years, there is at present a tendency to plan the syllabus and direct the effort to prepare the pupils to "satisfy the examiners" rather than themselves. Commercial houses and administrative offices are largely responsible for this state of affairs, as they have made the possession of this, that, or the other certificate a necessary qualification for entrance to their employ. In such schools the pupils naturally receive a theoretical rather than a practical training—in the science of life rather than in the art of living.

The foregoing remarks are needed to make it understandable why, in the secondary schools, with their intensive courses of study and specialist teachers for each course, strict time-tables are a necessity, and why this very strictness tends to act as a deterrent to the use of films, except as a rare occasional aid to teaching, whereas in the primary school the cinema may well provide the basis of teaching, especially in such subjects as geography.

The following suggestions are, therefore, offered primarily to primary schools.

The writer well remembers his introduction to formal geography (books in those days were not well illustrated). Certain "definitions" had to be learned, e.g. "A cape, ness or head is a piece of land jutting out into the sea." A wall chart showed a bird's-eye view of an imaginary country illustrating "The Geographical Terms" including, of course, "a cape, ness, or head." When, a little later, he saw the sea and Beachy Head the "definition" seemed sadly inadequate. Subsequently practically all the early mental pictures had to be revised.

It seems, therefore, reasonable, first of all, to give children as complete and correct a set of mental images as possible. Let them see the sights. That is the function of the cinema.

So far as geography is concerned the three years spent in the junior school might well be devoted entirely to sight-seeing; the three in the senior school to a further tour, this time for purposes of study.

The junior course can be designed on the lines of three separate conducted tours of the world, making little attempt to learn details, but simply seeing what things look like. Films are available of all the seven seas and the five continents.

The polar seas can be shown—their bergs and floes, their peculiar fauna, and the hunters and fishers on their shores; tropic and temperate seas in conditions of calm and storm; and the home waters. Pictures of calm sandy beaches and of waves breaking on rocky coasts will combine to give a correct diversified background to the study course of the three years in the senior school.

Similarly great mountain ranges, rivers, temperate and tropical forests, and arid deserts can be visited. Such a course of scenic films will take the place of the old "definitions" and will help the children to appreciate the world landscape and might constitute the first tour of the junior course.

The second year's tour might be devoted to visiting the people of the world. From Arctic coasts to tropic islands people may be seen adapting themselves, their houses, their clothing and their style of living to their environment. As many films as possible of children should be included in this tour.

The third year could be given to showing the pupils the means by which they themselves are fed and clothed. A round of visits, mining operations, and a whole multitude of transporting and manufacturing processes will provide a full and exciting year's tour of much of the world, although this year will be spent largely in the United Kingdom.

After the 11 break there will be left in the senior school a set of pupils who have seen much of the world, its landscapes, people and industries. They are about to embark on a new tour covering the same ground as before, perhaps not in the same order, and this time systematically studying detail as they go. By now the majority can read fairly fluently and are able to grasp a teacher's exposition. Their past experience (vicarious) of travel will enable them to understand his reference to the various physical aspects of the world, and they will be ready to appreciate most of what they see going on. The itinerary will, of course, be chosen according as to whether the world is being studied by climatic regions or by continents.

Whichever approach to the study of geography be in favour it will be found useful to determine in advance the number of teaching weeks available in the year. Presumably a text-book is used which runs on the lines of the syllabus (or perhaps on which the syllabus is based). If this text-book be divided into as many sections as there are teaching weeks, it will be found possible to allot in advance for each year a precise subject of study for each week. If the films are ordered well in advance it is possible to arrange that each

pupil knows for at least a term ahead what his subject will be for each week; and for the teacher to arrange that his exposition, the boys' reading, note-making and map-drawing, and the films shown all cover exactly the same ground, although perhaps teacher, writer and photographer may all view that ground from a slightly different angle. Probably—until quantitative tests have been carried out with specially prepared films it is difficult to say with certainty—the best method of getting the most out of films is by two showings, the first after an introductory talk, and the second after a clearing up talk, as the class will gain a general impression of the subject from the first view, but will want to ask questions as to certain points which they failed to understand. The second view will, as a result, be more intelligible than the first.

MAPS NEEDED

It is a frequent criticism of many geographical films that they do not include a map, and certainly many would be improved by such inclusion, particularly films dealing with very distant countries, or with comparatively little-known districts. The main function of such a map will probably be to indicate "how long away" the locality is from England. This could easily be done by a growing route graduated in days of sailing or of train journey, but this deficiency can easily be supplied by means of a sketch map lantern-slide. This can be made in a few minutes using a mapping pen and Indian ink at a cost of penny (for the glass), and can be projected on the screen for as long as desired. A complete set of such slides can be made with very little trouble, and once made can be filed and used time after time as required. For their projection, and for the projection of photographs or simple diagrams and sketches illustrating basic principles of machines or processes, it is convenient to fit up an ordinary lantern on the same stand as the cinema projector, or near it. A two-way switch will serve the purpose of immediately changing over from cinema to still at any point, and the map, or diagram, can be shown at leisure. This device should rarely be used except at the beginning or end of a film. A well-made film is designed as a picture of life, and to stop it is to kill it—a sin against the light.

It is probably better to miss part of the detail of a film rather than try to get too much out of it.

SUMMARY

Junior Course to comprise three tours.

First, world landscape; second, world's people; and third, world sources of supply of our own food and clothing.

The senior course, a single tour of three years' duration. Practically all the films used will be background to or illustrations of real geography.

In conclusion it is satisfactory to note that films covering most of the ground are included in the British Film Institute's pamphlets dealing with Geographical, Industrial and Foreign films.

ADDENDUM

Specimen from a syllabus for the current year at a senior school under the L.C.C. The column headed "Syllabus Section" is made up of the chapter headings of the textbook actually in use at the school.

1ST YEAR GEOGRAPHY

	<i>Syllabus Section</i>	<i>Films</i>
Nov. 3rd	Homelands of S. America	The Continent of S. America
10th	" "	In the Lee of C. Horn. Woollen Goods
17th	The Selvas of the Amazon	River Amazon
24th	Cattlemen of the Llanos	Coorial on the Orinoco
Dec. 1st	The Guianas	British Guiana. A Fast Life
8th	Lands of the High Andes	Bolivia, Peru
15th	" " " "	Head Hunters of Ecuador. Jungles of the Amazon
Jan. 12th	Planters of Brazil	Coffee. The Eastern Highlands
19th	Plate River	Argentina
26th	Chile	Chile. Among the Araucanians
Feb. 2nd	Looking back at S. America	The Amazonian Lowlands
9th	" " " "	Where they go a-rubbering
16th	" " " "	The Continent of S. America
23rd	Homelands of Africa	Regions of Africa. Jungle Trails
Mar. 2nd	" " "	Africa. Native Householder
9th	The Barbary States	The Ports of Morocco Tozeur to Biskra
16th	The Desert and the Camelmen	Life in the Sahara Oasis
23rd	Egypt and the Nile	Land of the Niles. Cape to Cairo
30th	" " " "	Children of the Nile
Apr. 6th	Farmers and Cattlemen of W. Africa	Accra. City of Kano. Oil Palm. Cocoa

It will be noticed that film titles are not always self-explanatory.

WORKING UNDER DIFFICULTIES

*Although this article by R. S. MILES
was written before war broke out, many
of its points are still pertinent*

THE LAST TWO ISSUES of SIGHT AND SOUND have contained two articles which, in their different ways, indicate the higgledy-piggledy conditions in the educational film world. The first one, in the Spring number, by Mr. C. Walshe, shows what can be done, when finances and facilities are limited, by a wide-awake local education authority. The other by Mr. Buckland Smith, expresses that sense of frustration which all teachers, who have anything to do with the use of the cinema in schools, feel when they realise how little has been done, how much remains to be done and how handicapped generally individual teachers are by the lack of knowledge of the educational value of films. Mr. Buckland Smith's plea must find an involuntary response from

those who use cinema, read cinema, and maybe dream it too. It depends upon those people whether the school cinema goes backward or forward, they are the nucleus around which future developments will centre. The tide of cinema usage in schools is now at the slack—it may ebb or it may flow. To make it flow will require much hard work and ardent propaganda, for the process will not be involuntary.

This process of propaganda must be carried on among educational administrators and educational authorities—as much if not more than among teachers, because in the ultimate resort the drive, organisation and finance must come from these quarters. Without their widespread support the use of the cinema in schools cannot hope to continue. Mr. Buckland Smith's article shows well how important the cinema is and supplies adequate reasons for its existence. Mr. Walshe indicates what can be done, under fairly adverse conditions, by a sympathetic authority using, of course, the skill and enthusiasm of teachers many of whom have given hours of spare time to the study of the subject.

A TYPICAL EXAMPLE

How different conditions are in many other places!

This example of the situation in one area may be typical of many. The L.E.A. has control of over 200 different departments and there is only one sound projector available (three schools have their own silent projectors). There are about 40 senior schools and secondary schools and out of these 14 only are fitted for the use of a projector. The area is a large one, the schools are scattered and the result is that the projector can only be used on occasions. As it has to be carried from one school to another by taxi, transport costs must be considered and in order to keep them within reasonable limits it is usual for the projector to be retained by one school for one to three weeks at a time. The disadvantages of such a scheme are obvious. There is a tendency to make as much use of the projector as possible in the time available. Consequently, many more films are booked than are educationally advisable. The children have a surfeit of films for a time followed by "seven lean years" until the projector is available again. A secondary consideration here is that if these films are shown in mass where is that vital "approach" and "follow on" coming in? Instead of the films becoming a link in a lesson sequence they become a definite break in some other series of lessons and the films themselves may refer to some lesson taken say, three months before or to a lesson which is going to be taken in a month or so's time. Many teachers have made the point that such an arrangement is not calculated to get the best out of the cinema which should be "on tap" for use at any time or at least available definitely once a week.

NOT A QUICK WAY

The use of the cinema does not necessarily mean a quick way to knowledge and an easy time for the teacher. It may mean a slower but much surer way and will certainly call for the fullest co-operation from the teacher and will demand all his alertness and interest to be able to make use of the lessons contained in the films. Again, the infrequent use of the cinema gives it almost the charm of novelty. Many head teachers are determined to make the greatest possible use of it and to this end crowd in as many children as the room will hold having but little regard for their differing ages, capacities and interests. A golden rule would be to make the

film fit the lessons as the lessons have to fit the children, but this method does not do that.

These conditions cause scepticism and scoffing from the "realist" members of the profession. They question the value of the cinema, regard it as somebody's plaything and "just another stunt." Thus there is an enormous mass of deadweight opposition being created and instead of its use acting as a revivifying agent it merely increases the scorn. The hand of the opposition is strengthened undoubtedly by the unsuitable nature of many of the films available for school use but this is the modern classical example of each waiting for the other to move. "Each" and "other" in this being producers and schools.

It is against conditions of this kind that the school cinema has to battle and for the successful issue, as Mr. Buckland Smith points out, propaganda—and much of it—is needed. As has been said earlier in this article—it is not only propaganda among teachers that is wanted but propaganda among AUTHORITY—in Whitehall, and up and down the country. Until L.E.A.'s are convinced of the cinema's value it is not much use teachers working.

By whom then must this propaganda be initially carried out? By the Film Institute? Everyone knows of the magnificent work that has been done and is being done now by this body which is only restricted in its activities by lack of money. The organisation is there in outline, the Staff possesses a more complete knowledge of conditions in the world of educational films than does any other organisation. The plans for expansion are surely there in embryo—money alone can achieve their realisation. If some philanthropist supplied the money the Film Institute would soon produce results. For "philanthropist" would it not be grand if we could read "Government?" The G.P.O travelling film units are doing great work on a limited scale—could not their number be increased? Could not the companies distributing films arrange regular shows? A minor but much needed reform is this—the giving of monthly shows in districts outside London, to teachers, of educational films new and old. If this were done teachers in the provinces would be kept abreast of latest releases and would be able to see those films about which they have read or heard. Many teachers outside London have little or no opportunity of pre-viewing the films and so they are forced to order on catalogue description only, sometimes with very disheartening results—as I have experienced. Such unfortunate occurrences do infinite damage to the reputation of the school cinema.

The professional organisations such as the N.U.T. or the N.A.S. might profitably enquire into this question and get to work on "missionary" activities. They might even sponsor the monthly shows just mooted—the funds in each area would, I feel sure, be able to bear such a comparatively light charge upon them.

Propaganda, as the Germans have so well shown, to be successful must be insistent and incessant. Film-makers and teachers should not forget that.

Mr. Buckland Smith has mentioned the possibility of those teachers who have been to the various "film schools" acting as "missionaries." Could they not be induced to instruct others in their knowledge as well as spreading enthusiasm? And could not the teachers who are interested in the use of the film in school form in each convenient area associations such as now exist in London, Middlesex, Manchester, etc., for their mutual benefit and that of education as a whole?

HISTORICAL FILMS

The teachers' point of view is clearly expressed in this striking article by ELIZABETH CROSS

HISTORICAL FILMS always arouse fierce controversy in common rooms and places where teachers congregate, but the following remarks are based on a certain amount of agreement. In any case, producers can be assured of our passionate interest in the subject and our equally great anxiety to support any historical film that is of the least bit of use to us.

I do not wish to discuss films of the "documentary" type; these are a race apart, and we view them with respect. Neither am I referring to the special films for showing in the classrooms. I want to confine myself entirely to the historical film made for general consumption: the film to which our pupils (particularly the adolescents and young adults) will go in their spare time and of their own freewill. These films have an enormous influence, and can be of the greatest assistance to teachers of history, social science, and many other subjects. They are the films we should like to recommend for entertainment with the added value of illuminating various studies. They are also the films we want to visit with conducted parties of children who have been specially prepared for what they will see.

Before descending to criticism (which may become destructive) perhaps I can explain some of our hopes when we hear of a new historical film in the making. It has much the same vague but decided feeling with which we await a fresh historical novel. We may know even better what we *don't* want than what we do, but like the average man and music we know what we like! With the historical novel (particularly for older pupils) we hope that it will add a further illusion of lively reality to our lessons. Some teachers have such a gift of story that their actual lessons can evoke the living past, but for most of us we need many aids in the shape of pictorial illustrations, actual specimens from museums, visits to old buildings and the use of exciting, worth-while stories that supply a background of authentic detail. Laws dealing with agriculture, for instance, have a real meaning when reinforced by a novel dealing graphically and dramatically with the poverty and starvation of the farm-labourers during the time of the Corn Laws. The increase in the use of machinery, the riots, child labour, all the background to the Factory Acts, these are absorbed as vital reality with the aid of a good story. More and more teaching is centring around such novels, or round memoirs that give sufficient detail that a social picture is made clear.

We want to be able to use films as such illustrative material, to be able to link up the vivid impressions so gained with the other information that is necessary for the various courses we plan. This is a very different matter from hoping for direct historical teaching from the films. History is a complicated matter, a matter for careful sifting, for weighing of evidence, for thoughtful evaluation. We certainly do *not* want potted "Kings and Queens of England" with all the old chief events laid out neatly, all the corners nicely rounded, and nothing left for the audience but to absorb the dose. Rather we should prefer a "story" dealing with entirely fictitious characters, moving in a certain period and showing in their lives the impact of

important historical events. For instance, we could have stories set in periods of rapid development of ideas, such as occurred after the introduction of printing, or when different religious beliefs caused conflict, or when industry was first seriously affected by scientific discoveries. After all, history is the life of the whole people, although, too long, we have tried to tie it down to an outline of royal personages, specific battles and outstanding personalities. Any event of historical importance must have its ever-widening waves of results that actually modify the everyday life of everyday folk. This is what historical films can show us, and that is what we are looking for.

We should, in addition to accuracy of detail in clothes, furniture, weapons and so on (which we do not always get by any means) like to have some accuracy in what can only be expressed as general atmosphere. That is, we want an illusion of reality, not what we so often get, a self-conscious posing in fancy-dress. We also want stress to be laid on the historically important features in any story, sufficient length being given to suggest what were weighty matters, and incidental affairs given the brief comment their unimportance warrants. Perhaps an illustration will make this clearer. Nearly every person interested in history (teachers included) have commented on the ridiculous manner in which Marco Polo's actual journey was suggested in the film. The journey was one of appalling difficulty and danger, the period one in which all journeys were tedious, and Marco's actual travels have always been stressed as an example of the general lack of geographical knowledge of the period, of how Italian merchants in particular increased that knowledge and opened up routes. Every teacher who makes use of these adventures pays particular attention to the slowness of the transport, the types of ship used, and so on. In the film we had a breathless series of flashes and there was our hero in the city of his desires (a city that looked remarkably like some of the more determined efforts of the new school of architecture—possibly a newspaper building or a block of super-Hampstead flats) and able to settle down to teaching a princess how to kiss.

Don't imagine that we are grumbling at the kissing, not at all. All we should have preferred was that Marco Polo should have spread his journey over several thousand feet of film and perhaps been allowed to kiss a few different damsels on the way. For, after all, if kissing was an essential part of his nature it is unlikely that he would have lasted all the way from Venice to China without some amatory pause. What we object to is the feeling that he got there so horribly swiftly, for the few shots of deserts and the fact that his comic servant was finally afflicted with "tired feet" was not sufficient to make us believe that he hadn't really had some little lifts now and then in an air-liner.

A good film must be able to have popular appeal without sacrificing what can only be described as historical balance. I can never believe that *The Private Life of Henry VIII* was really well done when I find most people having the clearest memory only of chicken bones being tossed away at table—however accurate any of this may be, it gave a self-conscious atmosphere—it didn't look at all as if everyone

tossed their bones about as a matter of course, but rather as if the producer had said: "Now let's give 'em something to talk about!" Table manners and general behaviour must be incorporated so smoothly that it is quite obvious to us all that people did behave like that and that there is nothing strange about it *because it happened in a certain age*, just as a good geographical film should show strange behaviour in a far country as being perfectly natural, too.

Perhaps these vague seeming wants on our part can be expressed a little more clearly if I say that most of us regard *The Good Earth* as a highly satisfactory picture for a geographical illustration. Any students working on China can find in this film a crystallisation of their studies, a clear expression of what climate means in that country, its effect on the people, through crops, animals and weather conditions. Perhaps there were errors of detail, I do not know, as I have never lived in China. But, from the point of view of one who has studied China for many years I was perfectly satisfied that I was being given a glimpse of the real country, with an emphasis on the true factors that shape Chinese life, and that the actors were serious in interpreting that life and showing us human beings in real situations. We want the same kind of attitude in our historical pictures.

I agree with many other teachers that accuracy of detail is important, but I believe that accuracy of general intention

is far more so. It is perfectly possible to explain to a class that some mistake had been made in the weapons or furnishing in a film, but it is impossible to do anything about a film that no one has taken seriously at all. For, after all, who could possibly believe in some of the heroines, so obviously in front of the fashion in face perfection and painted nails? The remarkable artificiality of some of the leading characters in, for example, *A Tale of Two Cities*, made a few good crowd scenes seem merely to have been cut out and inserted as make-weights!

To sum up what may seem a singularly unhelpful plea (but educationists can only say the type of film they want, and not how it can be made) we need plenty of thrilling, dramatic films that will have the personal quality of Benvenuto Cellini's memoirs, the lively intense detail of Dicken's *Oliver Twist*, the broad scope of Scott's *Ivanhoe*, the reality of *The Good Earth*, and the perfect casting of *Owd Bob*! These films would re-create history, make it alive and important to the man in the street who has probably been sickened by dates in his school days, and be the aids that up-to-date teachers are looking for to help their work in making the subject clear and vital to the younger generation.

(And we should like the characters to speak not American or B.C.C., but merely English.)

THE TEMPORARY ANNOTATION OF LANTERN SLIDES

THE STANDARD lantern slide, 3.25 in. square, with a photographic image bound and protected between glass, has certain well known advantages which go to compensate the user for its comparatively high cost, heavy weight, and risk of damage when dropped. It provides a first class photographic image with ample transmission of light, and it does not take permanent marks such as scratches and fingerprints. Teachers who use lantern slides may not be aware of a further advantage—the suitability of the material for annotation to suit their individual requirements before showing.

By the use of photographers' spotting medium—e.g., "Photopake"—notes, reference letters, and other details may be written or drawn on the outer surface of the cover glass, without preparation of the surface in any way, and projected in exact register with the picture material to which they refer, and, when the slide is done with these added notes may be removed merely by wiping the cover glass with a moist cloth.

The same method may be employed in the annotation of substandard lantern slides, 2 in. square, but on such slides even the most carefully drawn matter appears to be comparatively crude when projected, the magnification being about twice that of the standard slide if the screen image is brought to the same size.

If the image of the standard slide is sharply focussed, as it should be, the notes drawn on the glass surface will be slightly out of the plane of sharp focus, but under ordinary projection conditions the slight loss of focus in the added matter is insignificant. In the case of substandard slides

the loss of focus is greater and is comparatively more noticeable because the matter must be more finely drawn.

In the case of cellophane prints the annotation may be drawn on the cellophane or on the temporary cover glass.

H. E. DANCE

Cine-Photography for Amateurs by J. H. Reyner. 3rd Edition. Chapman and Hall. 10s. 6d.

Reviewed by H. D. Waley.

Since 1935 when the last edition of this useful book appeared the technique of amateur cinematography has by no means stood still and this revised edition of Mr. Reyner's well-known book is therefore certain of a warm welcome.

Considerable attention has been bestowed on new developments in film-speed and colour film, and the chapter on artificial lighting has been greatly improved.

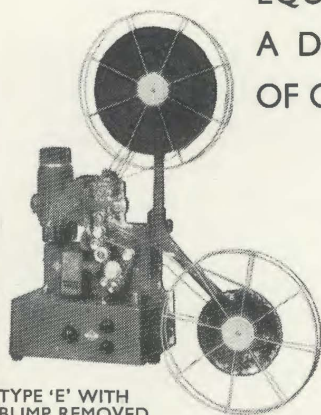
Incidentally the dust cover will serve to teach a salutary lesson to those book-reviewers who believe it possible that they may do some good in the world. It quotes the laudatory parts of a review of the last edition which appeared at the time in this Journal. This review contained the suggestion that Mr. Reyner's figure of "45 foot candles" as appropriate illumination for the substandard screen must originate either from a typographic error (e.g. "45" for "4 to 5") or from a complete misunderstanding of photometric methods. Nevertheless the mysterious "45 foot candles" duly reappear in this revised edition. So now the humbled reviewer finds himself clearly faced with the fact, which he probably ought to have realised long ago, that any praise which he may bestow will be regarded as raw material for the "blurb" of the next edition while such critical strictures as he may feel bound to utter will find their way straight to the editorial waste-paper basket.

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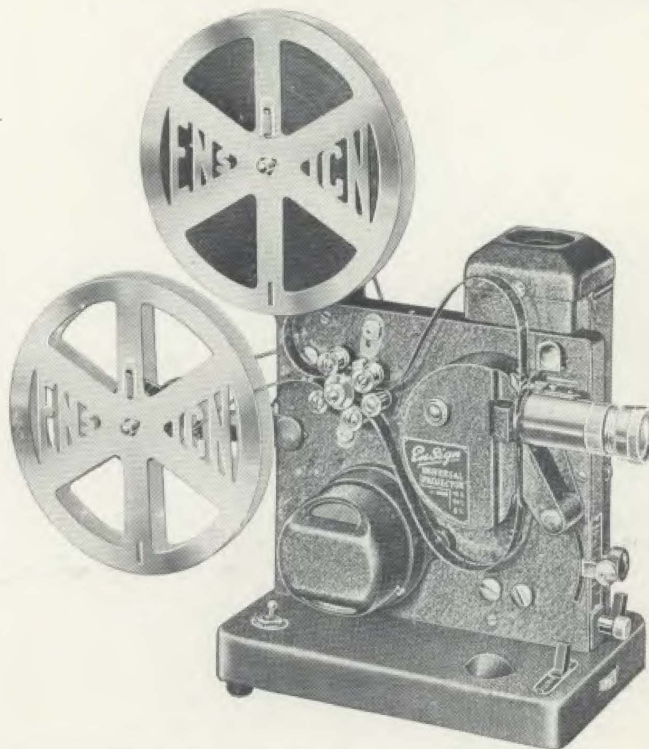
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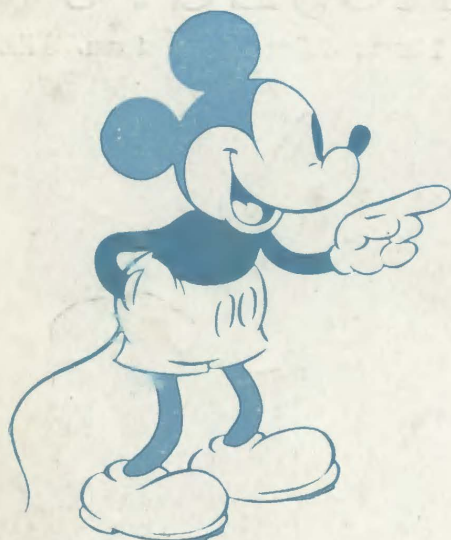
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